

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM: FASHION MERCHANDISING

SUBMITTED BY: JANICE ELLINWOOD

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program description from the Course Catalog: Please copy and paste the current year's catalog description of this program. This is generally a one-two paragraph description immediately following the name of the program. Please be sure to include the listing of program outcomes as printed.

List all of the program's learning outcomes: *(regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)*

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year	Year of Next Planned Assessment
Identify and foster salable apparel based on quality, appropriateness, price, target market and aesthetic appearance for the purpose of buying and/or product development.	2013-14		2016-17
Promote apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events (as demonstrated through Marymount's prestigious fashion show).	2013-14		2016-17
Apply the processes of product development, including consumer and trend research, forecasting, fabricating, garment styling and line development, technical design, pricing, sourcing, and retail distribution.	2013-14	2015-16	2017-18
Conduct merchandising research, consumer and data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.	2013-14	2015-16	2017-18

Describe how the program's outcomes support Marymount's mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan:

The outcomes directly relate to the effective career preparation of fashion merchandising students as well as the intellectual experience of each student. The study of fashion merchandising at Marymount divides into three career directions: retail buying, product development, and fashion promotion (including visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events). In addition, the program promotes inquiry-based learning through student-faculty collaboration. Marymount's fashion show, Portfolio in Motion, provides applicable professional development; fashion merchandising majors take the role of Head Coordinators and Specialists and work firsthand with its elements, such as sound choreography, lighting, set, public relations and marketing. Reflecting the diverse population of Marymount University at large, fashion merchandising students often represent a wealth of backgrounds, which brings a range of



global perspectives to the study of the field. In addition, through their research and travel with the CGE, they become well aware of the global trends in fashion, most specifically in the European countries, but often with exposure elsewhere, due to interaction with the local embassies.

Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment:

From the Program Review, the program's outcomes have been condensed from six to four, with each emphasizing a career "direction" and related research. Up to this point, there have been three reliable methods of assessment: inquiry learning course-embedded assessments for the sophomore, junior and senior years, assessments made by internship site supervisors, and a senior focus group. Historically these have worked reliably. However, the Department Chair was horrified to discover that the evaluations sent by the Center for Career Services to internship site supervisors over the 2015-16 academic year were not the specific versions geared to the fashion merchandising program and that measure career-applied skills, but a more generic version. So for this assessment report, site supervisor ratings are missing. This problem leaves significant data out of the report, but provides a good opportunity to update the evaluation form and gear it more appropriately to retail buying, product development and fashion promotion.

One course-embedded evaluation measures the learning for outcome #2 (see above) from a project on store design in AA273 Visual Merchandising for the sophomores. It is also used to measure inquiry learning. The project requires students to research an existing store and then improve upon its design and layout in terms of function and aesthetics. The students must integrate previous learning in the course (color, fixtures, traffic flow, lighting, etc.) in order to reach their solutions.

A second course-embedded evaluation measures learning for outcome #3 (above) aimed at juniors and seniors in AA407 Product Development, in which the entire course is an exercise in inquiry. From consumer and trend research, students go through the process of hypothetically launching an apparel product into the market place, including its design, technical design, production, marketing and distribution.

The third course-embedded evaluation occurs at the capstone paper/oral presentation, which is a case analysis related to contemporary problems in the fashion industry. The data from this method of inquiry also measures outcome #4. However, students opt for the different specialties in their research, so topics may relate to retail buying, visual merchandising, fashion writing, fashion magazines, social media marketing, fashion show events, styling, product development, etc.

The rubric used for evaluation has been adjusted to the performance outcomes that match the liberal arts core—active research and sound reasoning, information literacy, critical thinking and communication.

The Senior Focus Group is one of the most valuable sources of feedback on learning. Students are asked one question related to each program objective:
1. "Can you identify and foster salable apparel based on quality, appropriateness, price, target market and aesthetic appearance for the purpose of retail buying?" **2.** "Can you promote apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events?" **3.** "Can you apply the processes of product development, including research, line development, technical design and sourcing?" **4.** "Do you know how to conduct merchandising

research, consumer and data analysis, and apply findings o merchandising problems?” Students respond affirmatively or negatively and discussion ensues—sometimes positive in nature, other times negative, or without either perspective, but often with sound suggestions for improvements to the curriculum.

When operational, the internship evaluation, administered through the Center for Career Services, asks supervisors to evaluate performance related to each program objective on a scale of Superior (4), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (1), N/A (0). For instance, the supervisor evaluates how well the student “identifies and fosters salable apparel based on quality, appropriateness, price, target market, and aesthetic appearance for the purpose of retail buying.”

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
Apply the process of product development, including consumer and trend research, forecasting, fabricating, garment styling and line development, technical design, pricing, sourcing and retail distribution.	Drop AA410 Clothing Selection and Behavior (make it an elective called Fashion Consulting and Culture); Divide AA270 Clothing Analysis between AA260 Sample Room Techniques II (sewing studio no longer required) and AA307 Product Development I (required lecture to focus on technical design, quality standards of clothing related to pricing, mass production); Add AA395 Digital Presentation for Fashion as a requirement. Decrease internship from 6 to 3 credits. Product Development is perceived as one of the goals of the program, along with Buying and Fashion Promotion. We continue to request APBP for a workstation that will lead to a grant for thousands of dollars worth of industry-dedicated software.	All curriculum changes passed. AA307 Product Development I ran as a requirement in this academic year. It will be a year or two before FM majors enroll in AA395 Digital Presentation for Fashion, because it is offered in the junior year. Because Product Development is a goal, FM majors should take it in senior year, like FD majors, with other courses viewed as leading up to it i.e. AA307 Product Development I; AA405 Fashion in the Global Marketplace (sourcing)- becomes a junior year course. Over the course of three-four years, APBP has rejected the budget to spend on the workstation to obtain industry-dedicated software from Lectra Corporation, along with faculty training.
Conduct merchandising research, consumer and data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.	We adjusted our inquiry learning rubric to be consistent with the goals of the liberal arts core—that is, critical thinking, inquiry, information literacy, and communication.	That rubric went into practice to evaluate the inquiry learning projects at the sophomore, junior and senior levels.

Provide a response to last year's University Assessment Committee review of the program's learning assessment report:

Our last response came from our Program Review. We were criticized for not doing anything to boost enrollment, even though we present and publicize Portfolio in Motion each year and bring an internationally known designer to our campus, run Portfolio in Motion and Fashion Club Facebook pages, have Fashion Club participate in DC-area charitable events (they received an award from the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation), have a presence on every single form of social media, including 6 minute versions of the show running on YouTube—and that has all happened in the last past several years and continuing. We now have a new focus on social media to draw transfers to the department. However, the Center for Career Services was an impediment to our ability to get it off the ground for half of the semester—so instead of obtaining immediate results for Spring 2017, it is more likely we will yield it in Fall 2017.

APBP endorsed the purchase of a workstation to obtain thousands of dollars of industry-dedicated technology, but put no budget toward it.

APBP endorsed having in-program academic advisors, but due to the decrease in fashion faculty, that is not possible. At present Professor Ellinwood alone sees all fashion design majors, advises for internships and careers, reacts to student academic problems, etc. Pam Stoessell sees a significant number of FM majors and advises Fashion Club and Portfolio in Motion. In lieu of a staff in the University Advancement Office, Professor Ellinwood worked solely with VP Joe Foster to present the reception that runs prior to the Thursday night Portfolio in Motion. And of course, we do nothing to improve enrollment, but we run the fashion show three nights in a row...not to mention implement the Designer of the Year's review of the seniors' portfolios.

APBP recommended an increase in the incorporation of professionals; of course, there is the international designer each year, but we just featured Eric Green, Creative Director of Charming Charlie's, who spoke to fashion students, as well as Interior Design students, regarding store design. Fashion Club's participation in area stores brings them hand to hand with well-known designers—last year at Saks, for instance, with Tommy Hilfiger and wife Dee Ocleppo (one of many, many opportunities).

Fashion Merchandising majors often have a minor, because the number of requirements allows for it. Most, although apparently the School of Business does not realize it, minor in Business with an emphasis on Marketing. However, some minor in Fashion Design, Communications and Communications Media Design. We do not need Finance or Accounting in the curriculum, because the processes used in those courses are not the ones used in retail buying or costing for manufacturers, which FM students already obtain in AA307 Product Development I and AA382 Merchandise Planning and Analysis, not to mention AA407 Product Development II.

There is also a suggestion that fashion faculty "leverage the MU website" to attract enrollment—of course, with all the activities above, one may understand why three tenure track faculty members can't get to everything. High school students often choose their colleges on what they see on social media today anyway. However, for any ongoing concern, please check out the "lay-up" page to the fashion programs, the Portfolio in Motion page, the list of Designers of the Year, etc., etc.

Outcomes Assessment 2015-2016

Learning Outcome 3: Apply the processes of product development, including consumer and trend research forecasting, fabricating, garment styling and line development, technical design, pricing sourcing and retail distribution.

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	Performance Standard <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	Data Collection <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	Analysis <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Direct Measure: Students work in teams to develop an apparel line as a result of consumer and trend research, consulting on styling, pricing, sourcing and marketing etc. Each student is given a task in the process, resulting in a product or project, and that is evaluated by the professor in the course.	60% of students will achieve a rating of "Strong" (4) in active research and sound reasoning, information literacy, critical thinking, and communication. Other ratings are Adequate (3) Marginal (2) Attempt That Fails (1) No Evidence (0).	The professor in the course fills out the evaluations and gives them to the Department Chair, who does the tabulations.	Out of 23 students, 10 were rated Strong (4) in active research and sound reasoning, information literacy, critical thinking and communication, 9 were rated Adequate (3) in each of those categories, and 4 were rated Marginal (2) in those categories. The number rated "Strong" reaches just under 50%, so the standard was not met.
Indirect Measure: Senior Focus Group	Seniors answer affirmatively when asked, " <i>Can you apply the processes of product development, including consumer and trend research, forecasting, fabricating, garment styling and line development, technical design, pricing,</i>	The Department Chair conducts the Senior Focus Group during exam week in the course AA422 Senior Seminar in Fashion Merchandising. She records the comments.	Seniors did answer the question affirmatively, but went on to discuss that they did not feel secure in the areas of technical design and fabricating. They suggested adding AA395 Digital Presentation for Fashion for added support with technology and presentation. They named the courses that they thought supported the outcome, including AA151 Textiles AA250 Sample Room Techniques I, AA270 Clothing Analysis (now AA307 Product Development I), AA405 Fashion in the Global Marketplace, and AA407 Product Development II. They also reflected that AA405 Fashion in the Global Marketplace dealt too

	<i>sourcing and retail distribution?"</i>		much with international cultures and not enough on sourcing, involving an agent and selecting a contractor.
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Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

The standard was short of being achieved—course-embedded evaluations reflecting that under 50% were rated “Strong,” ironically in each category. In addition, although seniors *thought* they could apply all of the product development processes, they admitted to being insecure about technical design, fabricating, and ultimately, sourcing.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

After the Program Review, the Department decided to add AA395 Digital Presentation for Fashion as a required course, so future students may feel stronger in their technical design abilities. The technical drawing of garments by computer is taught in that course. The emphasis on technical design offered by the new course AA307 Product Development I may also strengthen students’ abilities in the future. The syllabus and selection of a textbook in AA405 Fashion in the Global Marketplace should shift more of the course content on to sourcing, selecting an agent and contractor from international cultures.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

As described above, the department will watch for improvement as fashion merchandising students readily enroll in AA307 Product Development I and AA395 Digital Presentation for Fashion during these transition years. In addition, the content in AA405 Fashion in the Global Marketplace should shift immediately from international cultures to sourcing i.e. selecting an agent and contractor for production of an apparel product.

Learning Outcome 4: Conduct merchandising research, consumer and data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	Performance Standard <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	Data Collection <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	Analysis <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Direct Measure: Senior capstone presentations and papers are evaluated by	Since this is a senior capstone project, the goal is for 80% of the students to obtain a rating	The professor in AA422 Senior Seminar in Fashion Merchandising evaluates the	The course meets in both the Fall and Spring semesters. Out of a total of 20 seniors, 20 were rated Strong (4) in active research and sound reasoning, 11 were rated Strong

outcomes related to the liberal arts core by the professor in AA422 Senior Seminar in Fashion Merchandising.	of Strong (4) in active research and sound reasoning, information literacy, critical thinking, and communication. The other ratings are Adequate (3), Marginal (2), Attempt that Fails (1), No Evidence (0).	capstone presentation and paper and gives the evaluations to the Department Chair for tabulation.	(4) in information literacy, 4 Adequate (3), and 5 Marginal (2); 9 were Strong (4) in critical thinking, 8 were Adequate (3), and 2 (2) marginal; in communication, 9 were rated Strong (4), 7 Adequate (3), 3 Marginal (2), and 1 Attempt that failed (1). The standard was not achieved, but this is the first year of using the rubric to coincide with the liberal arts outcomes.
Indirect Measure: Senior Focus Group	Seniors must answer affirmatively when asked, "Can you conduct merchandising research, consumer and data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems?"	The Department Chair conducts the Senior Focus Group during exam week in AA422 Senior Seminar in Fashion Merchandising. She records the comments.	Seniors unanimously answered affirmatively to the question regarding the conducting of merchandise research. It is interesting that they felt confident in themselves while the evaluations documented more of a range in abilities.

Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

This outcome was not achieved. The standard of 80% is high, and perhaps should be lowered, but these are seniors being evaluated in their capstone course. This is the first time the rubric that was used was consistent with the goals of the liberal arts core. One question is whether the measures were interpreted in a similar manner to a professor in a traditional discipline.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

Because the outcome was measured according to the outcomes of the liberal arts core, perhaps a comparison could be made to seniors evaluated in other majors. Is this performance typical at Marymount—or only in fashion merchandising? Is there a trend presented across disciplines? In this year, active research and sound reasoning did not present the lacking in the standard; information literacy, critical thinking and communication were much weaker. The conclusion may be that they understand the merchandising reasoning either from the repetition of major courses or actually working in the field, but are not up to standard in the other outcomes.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

There was one other observation the Professor made—that is, there were several students from other countries in the senior classes. It may make sense that they are behind somewhat on information literacy and communication. And those two areas could affect critical thinking. However, one senior made the mistake of thinking that if she worked for a company and had to solve a business problem about it, she did not have to consult experts to solve her case—articles about the business, members of management in the business, etc. Sadly, that was not a student who grew up in another country. More conversation about senior abilities should take place across the disciplines. What is typical? What are the expectations, etc.?