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## **INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP FOR ENHANCED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: A JUNIOR LOUNGEWEAR LINE DEVELOPED BY FASHION STUDENTS**

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To stimulate learning and apply practice to theory in a creative and collaborative effort, a project was conducted involving a national apparel retailer and fashion students. This project integrated merchandising and design students in an industry-based product development experience. The students developed a lounge-wear line for the Junior Intimate Apparel department at a national retailer.

The process of the project was theoretically based upon Gaskill's Product Development Model (Gaskill, 1992). Two merchandising classes were integrated into the project: Fashion Marketing and Product Development. The merchandising students were divided into selected groups, five in all, each group having a design, merchandising, and marketing team within each group.

Design students in the program participated as a selected project in their Senior Design class. The design students were "hired" based on their illustration skills by the merchandising students on a contractual basis. Design students participated in varying degrees depending upon the contract, thus mirroring the interaction of design and merchandising in the industry.

The result of the project was that the company selected one line for sourcing, production, and ultimate sales in the stores in Spring 1999. The selected brand and logo were placed on the clothing labels and hangtags were attached to include recognition of the University.

Gaskill, L. R. (1992). Toward a model of retail product development. Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, 10(4), 17-24.