



## **INTRODUCTORY UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

Sue H. Whitaker  
Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306

To foster the development of research skills in undergraduate students, a research project was included as a part of the introduction course for fashion merchandising and apparel design majors. The activity was designed to help the students achieve the following course objective: The student will be able to demonstrate the principles, dynamics, and nature of the fashion and consumer fashion demand. In addition the project also helped the students achieve competence in critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The focus of the research was on consumer satisfaction. The students were involved in the entire research process from the development of the instrument to the final reporting of the results. After the approval of the project through appropriate channels the students in the class volunteered to work at different times in the store to distribute the survey. Following the analysis of the data the students were given the raw data to interpret and write a brief report on the results. Officials from the store were invited to class where they were given both an oral and written report of the study.

The strategy has resulted in several positive outcomes. It provided the students with a hands-on experience as to how market and consumer information is gathered for use in the fashion industry. In addition, the students have had the opportunity to demonstrate computer, written, and oral communication skills. Plans are to continue the project and, over time, build a data base of information regarding local customer satisfaction.