



## Collaborative Fashion Production Applying a Real Life Scenario

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Effective communication between designers, manufactures, and buyers is essential in today's global fashion industry especially with the rapid growth of fast fashion and offshore production (Burce & Daly, 2006). Therefore, it will be important for merchandising students to learn the production process as well as comprehend information that was developed by designers, and create a product line that incorporates their own ideas and designs.

Fashion merchandising students were challenged to develop a clothing line in a Collaborative Fashion Production class that could be sold in a school- sponsored store. The main goal of this project was to simulate real life work situations where merchandising students work as a team to read and understand a production packet developed by design students, be challenged to develop a cohesive line composed of different garment categories, and learn to promote a product line by developing an online catalog.

This project is an extension of a previous one developed in a fashion design course where design students created a garment using a sustainable design practice called zero waste. In that class, design students developed a uniquely designed product that utilized zero waste pattern development and created a production packet that included a sketch page, trim page, construction detail, measurement sheet and marker and pattern information. The detailed production package was developed in that class to ensure that the production packet could be used for reproduction for the school- sponsored retail store. Those production packets were evaluated and used in this Collaborative Fashion Production course to produce garments in different sizes and fabrics. The students created a cohesive line, keeping merchandising coherent so real customers could mix and match different items. Merchandising students were challenged to research consumers who shop in the school- sponsored store, so that they would be able to understand how to produce, promote, and merchandise products that will appeal to its store customers.

The purpose of this collaborative merchandising project was to empower students by giving them real life work experience. This was achieved by having them use an already developed production packet and work as a team, putting business-based merchandising into practice. Students also had to use organic cotton, digital printed fabric, and minimal waste marking/cutting processes to produce garments using a sustainable production process.

This project was launched in a spring 2014 elective merchandising course. Each team of students (two or three students together) was asked to produce a garment from a previously developed production packet that was developed by design students from another class. Students were also required to research about current trends and visit the school-sponsored store to research its target customers. First, students in the collaborative production class developed paper patterns following the pattern information found in the production packet. Second, the students created multiple sample garments and adjusted patterns based on fit evaluations. Third, students constructed the final garments using their own design fabric made from their use of a digital textile printer or a laser cutter to create a cohesive line. Finally, after the final garments were produced, students from this class had to create an online catalog that can be used as advertisement for the school-sponsored store. Students in this class were challenged to learn basic sewing skills and construction techniques and to create new prints or fabric designs incorporating their design ideas. Fit evaluations of sample garments were also an important component of this class project that students had to learn. These challenges enabled merchandising students not only to understand the information that was developed by designers but also to learn what goes into the full garment production process.

This class project aims to help students to become viable candidates for the fashion industry by having them experience real life challenges. From this class project, merchandising students were able to understand the full cycle of the fashion industry from design to promotion by actually producing garments and creating an online catalog. Furthermore, merchandising students were also able to incorporate their own design ideas by creating fabric designs via digital textile printing and laser cutting methods. Students in this class also learned to create and promote a production line that will appeal to real life customers through research process.

Students truly enjoyed this project and expanded their knowledge of the design and production process. Some of the comments from students included enjoyed collaboration, learned to appreciate and better understand the design and production process, and hands-on experience increased their confidence before getting a real job in the fashion industry. The success of this class project will be evaluated by the sales of garments that will be sold in the school-sponsored store. This project will continue into the future and use feedback from customers of the school-sponsored store make improvements on itself.

Bruce, M. and Daly, L. (2006). Buyer behavior for fast fashion, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 10(3), 329-344.