

REVIEW OF THE B.A., B.S., IN FASHION DESIGN AND MERCHANDISING

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 19.0901
Apparel and Textiles, General

OVERVIEW

The **B.A., B.S., in Fashion Design and Merchandising** program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department Family and Consumer Sciences within the College of Applied Science and Technology. The Department of Family and Consumer Sciences houses seven degree programs: B.A., B.S. in Family and Consumer Sciences, B.A., B.S. in Fashion Design and Merchandising, B.A., B.S. in Food, Nutrition, and Dietetics, B.A., B.S. in Human Development and Family Science, B.A., B.S. in Interior Design, M.A., M.S. in Family and Consumer Science, and a M.S. in Nutrition. In addition, the department offers a minor in Family and Consumer Sciences and a Dietetic Internship Graduate certificate. This is the first review of the B.A., B.S., in Fashion Design and Merchandising program as a stand-alone program.

The B.A., B.S., in Fashion Design and Merchandising prepares students for employment in the product development, distribution and retail sectors of the textile and apparel business industries. Students study the flow of apparel from production to sales with a focus on apparel design, merchandising, and product development and analysis, as well as business skills that employers find attractive. Students enrolling in the B.A., B.S., in Fashion Design and Merchandising select from either the Fashion Design and Merchandising sequence or the Fashion Design and Merchandising Accelerated sequence (established Fall 2018). The B.A., B.S. in Fashion Design and Merchandising was elevated from the Apparel Merchandising and Design sequence within the B.A. B.S. in Family and Consumer Science degree program in Fall 2016.

Enrollment by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2015-2022

B.A., B.S., in Fashion Design and Merchandising, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fashion Design and Merchandising sequence					5	43	75	79
Fashion Design and Merchandising Accelerated sequence					2	2	2	3
No subplan			93	114	98	50	18	3
Total			93	114	105	97	95	85

Table notes: The Fashion Design and Merchandising Accelerated sequence began in Fall 2018.

Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, 2015-2022

B.A., B.S., in Fashion Design and Merchandising, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Fashion Design and Merchandising sequence						2		6
Fashion Design and Merchandising Accelerated sequence							2	1
No subplan				24	38	32	24	13
Total				24	38	34	26	20

Program review conducted 2021-2022. Report submitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Fall 2022

Table notes: Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018. The Accelerated sequence began in Fall 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

Fashion Design and Merchandising students will develop:

- Goal 1: capacity for critical and creative thinking and problem solving
- Goal 2: skills in communication, professionalism, and technology
- Goal 3: capacity for working in diverse environments and demonstrate a global perspective on the textile and apparel industry
- Goal 4: specific content knowledge in the field of apparel merchandising and design

Student learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

Goal 1 outcomes:

- Construct a garment using a commercial pattern
- Develop a repeated pattern to be screen printed on fabric for an appropriate end use

Goal 2 outcomes:

- demonstrate an understanding of the creative process and how promotion relates to merchandising by creating a store environment with visual retailing software
- communicate professionally

Goal 3 outcomes:

- apply knowledge of global textiles and apparel supply chain to make and evaluate sourcing decisions for apparel product line development
- interact effectively with diverse individuals in a work situation

Goal 4 outcomes:

- Analyze the quality of mass market garments at multiple price points
- Effectively demonstrate knowledge of fashion trends and industry
- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and identification of course concepts including fiber, yarn, fabric, coloration, and finish terms

Program curriculum (2021-2022)

Graduation requirements (Fashion Design and Merchandising sequence):

120 credit hours including 61 credit hours for the degree program and 39 credit hours for General Education. The 61 credit hours for the degree program include 48 credit hours of family and consumer sciences courses and 13 credit hours of courses external to the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Graduation requirements (Fashion Design and Merchandising accelerated sequence):

120 credit hours including 61 credit hours for the degree program and 39 credit hours for General Education. The 61 credit hours for the degree program include 48 credit hours of family and consumer sciences courses and 13 credit hours of courses external to the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. At least one course must be taken for graduate credit.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face instruction.

Department faculty (Fall 2021)

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18 tenure track faculty members (5 Professors, 4 Associate Professors, and 9 Assistant Professors)

15 non-tenure track faculty members (7 full-time, 8 part-time, totaling 10.5 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 20 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 31 to 1

Specialized accreditation

The Department of Family and Consumer Sciences is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). The department received full re-accreditation in 2021. The next scheduled departmental accreditation review will be in 2031.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

Demand for Fashion Design and Merchandising program graduates continues to be strong. The broad fashion course content required of all majors provides a wider variety of career opportunities than are typically available to graduates from other fashion programs with a narrower focus. Whether a student graduates with a concentration in fashion design or fashion merchandising, careers in areas such as trend forecasting, sourcing, production, promotion, or styling provide a range of opportunities. Students with a concentration in fashion merchandising have strong career prospects in product buying and merchandising. Students with concentrations in fashion design are uniquely prepared for careers within technical fashion design.

Demand for the Fashion Design and Merchandising program by prospective students remains consistent and will continue to be an area of focused growth by Fashion Design and Merchandising faculty. Though demand is consistent, the desire is to increase demand in the future. Recruitment efforts include focusing on how the program's broad content foundation prepares students to be more flexible in a variety of career paths post-graduation, a factor that sets the program apart from others in the state and region. Also emphasized are the outstanding labs and facilities dedicated to Fashion Design and Merchandising, the many opportunities to travel and make connections with fashion leaders throughout the field, and the unique student-led fashion show that allows an inclusive environment for all students at any level in their program to apply knowledge learned through show activities.

Two trends in the fashion industry have influenced changes made in Fashion Design and Merchandising course content in recent years, sustainability, and increased technology. An awareness of the harmful effects of the fashion industry on the environment has given rise to efforts to reverse this truth. Sustainability-related concepts have been added to nearly every Fashion Design and Merchandising course, addressing such issues as fabric waste, eco-friendly dyes, ethical sourcing, and the costs of "fast fashion."

As the fashion industry continues to embrace new technologies it is imperative that educational programs do so as well in order that graduates are prepared for the workplace. From fashion design software to business analytics to online selling platforms, every aspect of the industry uses a variety of technologies in day-to-day business. While new technologies have been introduced over the years in Fashion Design and Merchandising courses, program faculty continue to look for new programs to add that can better prepare students for their future careers.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

Since Fashion Design and Merchandising B.A., B.S. program was new in 2016, there was no previous program review and self-study report. However, the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences programs did go through AAFCS accreditation recently and was found to be in compliance with AAFCS standards.

Recommendations made to the department overall have been addressed within the Fashion Design and Merchandising program specifically:

1. Develop and implement a plan to encourage faculty and student participation in the Honors program. The Honors program is featured each year in the Fall Fashion Design and Merchandising Student meeting. Each faculty

member addresses it in their syllabus for each course and regularly works with students wishing to complete an honors project in their course.

2. *Continue to work toward increasing the percentage of faculty in the department who are tenured or in tenure track faculty positions.* Fashion Design and Merchandising has maintained four tenure-track faculty lines and one non-tenure track line through successful national searches.

3. *Integrate ongoing program assessment with assessment processes required by accreditors, with a goal of creating a sustainable assessment plan for the program that is independent of accreditation requirements.* Fashion Design and Merchandising created and implemented an assessment process for the program based on goals from the premiere professional organization in apparel and textiles.

4. *Continue reliance on sequence advisory boards for feedback and recommendations for program improvement, reinvigorating boards that have been inactive in recent years.* Fashion Design and Merchandising has a representative on the department advisory board and is working towards a separate advisory board focused solely on Fashion Design and Merchandising.

5. *Develop and implement a plan to reduce time-to-degree, identifying and addressing obstacles to timely completion at the sequence level.* The entire Fashion Design and Merchandising curriculum was reviewed with selected changes made to reduce time-to-degree and address obstacles to timely completion.

6. *Continue efforts to recruit students and faculty from underrepresented groups.* Inviting high school students from around the state to attend the annual Illinois State Fashion Show as special guests is one example of how underrepresented groups have been included.

Additionally, in 2017-18 the Fashion Design and Merchandising faculty voluntarily completed a review of the program to determine strengths and areas of improvement. Each course was reviewed, compared against offerings from peer and aspirational institutions, and evaluated for relevancy in the current career climate. An external reviewer was brought in from Kent State University to review all aspects of the program as well. Major recommendations from the external reviewer were to add two new merchandising courses and one special topics course in content area not already addressed in our curriculum. Those courses were written in 2018, approved in 2019 and started to be taught in 2020.

Major findings

- The program's faculty and student populations have become more diverse in recent years. Since 2016, minority student population has increased from 18.3 percent to 36.8 percent; male students as percent of total student population went up from 1.1 percent to 9.5 percent. One faculty with international experience joined the program, and the number of male faculty has increased from 0 percent to 20 percent.
- The program review reveals that program's faculty dedicate significant time and effort to maintain consistent student enrollment and retention trends. This is achieved not only through high-quality classroom teaching and updated content, but also through faculty-sponsored student organizations and travel as well as research opportunities with faculty.
- During the program review cycle, there have been many changes to our curriculum due to changing industry content and a desire to make the program more flexible for internal and external transfer students. For example, four new courses were created during this period while numerous others were revised.
- The assessment plan for the Fashion Design and Merchandising program has provided strong data to confirm the overall success of Fashion Design and Merchandising students meeting and exceeding program and fashion industry goals. The program will continue to review the assessment plan to identify curricular needs and changes in the future.
- A major finding of this program review self-study is that the Fashion Design and Merchandising program is meeting the current needs of students and industry. The current curriculum meets the demands of the profession, and graduates from the Fashion Design and Merchandising program are well-prepared to obtain a professional job in the industry.

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- To strengthen the program and make graduates even more prepared, new fashion-focused technologies should be incorporated in the program (Action 1). Not only will additional technology enhance career-preparedness, but it will also serve as a recruiting tool for potential students.
- As one way to respond to declining student enrollment, Fashion Design and Merchandising faculty will increase the online presence of the program to better communicate student opportunities and engagement (Action 2).

Initiatives and plans

During the next program review cycle, the faculty of the Fashion Design and Merchandising program will focus on the following areas to improve the program:

- Continue to adapt and implement a curriculum that reflects trends and needs in the fashion industry. Continue to train students using industry-specific technology, regularly incorporating new technology to keep students at the cutting-edge of the field.
- Expand recruitment efforts.
- Create an online professional photo gallery/archive of students' projects and fashion shows to highlight work completed in Fashion Design and Merchandising courses.
- Continue to encourage faculty and student participation in the Honors program.
- Continue efforts to recruit students and faculty from underrepresented groups.
- Create an advisory board specific to Fashion Design and Merchandising, in addition to continuing participation on the department-wide advisory board, to receive feedback and recommendations to improve the Fashion Design and Merchandising program.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.A., B.S. in Fashion Design and Merchandising program in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-report were accomplished during the time period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks the program for a comprehensive and critical self-study report that included input from multiple stakeholders including from an external advisory board.

The committee notes that the program's enrollment during the period covering the program review cycle (2016-2020) has been varied (with a low of 93 in 2016 and a high of 114 in 2017) but consistently below the program's indicated ideal target of 130 students. The program faculty see an opportunity for controlled growth of the program. The committee commends the Department faculty for efforts to increase gender and racial/ethnic diversity among its students. The percentage of students identifying as male has increased from 1.1 percent in fall 2016 to 9.5 percent in fall 2020. The percentage of undergraduate students from groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline has increased from 18.3 percent to 36.8 percent. The committee commends the Department for their comprehensive recruitment plan that includes the use of short videos, emails, postcards, flyers, social media postings, and participation in recruitment events (e.g., open houses, Redbird Days, and Presidential, University Scholar days, and tours for local high school students of the Department's laboratory facilities). We also commend the Department for the awarding of over \$40,000 annually for incoming FTIC and transfer students.

The committee commends the program faculty for their efforts to support the success of their students. We commend the program on its ability to continue to limit enrollments in many of its courses, which is in keeping with the University's commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities. The committee commends the program for the creative and varied co-curricular options it provides its students; through these activities, students learn from experts in the field, network with potential employers, and compete in regional

and national student competitions. Examples include the Family and Consumer Sciences Ambassador program (providing opportunities to practice leadership skills) and membership in organizations including the Fashion Design and Merchandising Association (allowing students to network with faculty, alumni, and industry professionals) and the National Retail Federation Student Association (allowing access to scholarship programs, networking opportunities, and the latest industry news and research). The committee also commends the program faculty for their collaboration with the Illinois State Fashion Show executive board to organize the annual fashion show to showcase students' creative work. We further commend the program faculty for their support of study abroad opportunities to visit diverse cultural centers of fashion (e.g., Paris, Seoul, Florence, Hong Kong, and Tokyo). The self-study report provides examples of some of the opportunities for student participation in research opportunities, including co-authored conference presentations and manuscripts. These varied opportunities help the program prepare students for employment and build a strong student community in the program.

The committee commend the faculty for their substantial work to revise the curriculum during the period of review based on feedback from multiple stakeholders. This work included the elevation of the program from a sequence to a standalone program, the creation of several new undergraduate courses (i.e., FCS 367, 372, 373, and 379), and the revisions of others (i.e., FCS 327, 328, and 369). These revisions were made to enhance students' knowledge and competency in the discipline as well as to provide an opportunity to develop a portfolio for career preparation. We further commend the program faculty for their work to develop an accelerated sequence for students interested in continuing their education in the M.A., M.S. in Family and Consumer Sciences program. Furthermore, the program faculty are commended for their work to infuse issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the program curriculum. The committee commends the faculty for achieving accreditation by the Council for Accreditation of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFSC) and maintaining compliance with AAFSC standards.

The committee commends the program faculty on the development, implementation, and revision of their plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes. During the current review cycle, faculty have used the evidence gathered through the student learning outcomes assessment plan to inform program changes, and this includes the incorporation of rubrics as tools for assessing student coursework regarding the program's learning outcomes. The committee acknowledges the use of such rubrics as one method to provide consistent reviews of student learning that can provide potential areas for improvement. The information gathered through these measures has been used to make program changes, and several examples of these changes were specified.

The committee recognizes the faculty members of the program for their scholarly contributions to the B.A., B.S. in Fashion Design and Merchandising program. Faculty members are active researchers who publish peer-reviewed journal articles and present at national and international professional conferences. Additionally, we recognize that every faculty in the program has been actively involved in advising and supporting professional student organizations, demonstrating their commitment to facilitate learning and educational experiences of our students outside the classroom. The committee also applauds the practice of asking faculty to submit a diversity statement as part of their annual productivity review.

The committee appreciates the in-depth analysis of comparator and aspirational programs. As part of this analysis, the program faculty identified multiple institutions with similar programs that excel in ways that our program may aspire to. The committee also recognizes that faculty developed specific action plans to implement similar initiatives as those to improve the program at Illinois State University.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty members of the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences for the opportunity to provide input regarding the Fashion Design and Merchandising program at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with department faculty members. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2030, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Develop a plan for controlled enrollment growth. The committee notes that demand for the program has been strong, resulting in relatively stable enrollments, however, enrollment is currently below the program's ideal target. The committee acknowledges the work faculty have completed regarding their recruitment efforts, and that this work has been successful in enrolling both first-time-in-college students and external transfer students in the program. Given the time and energy that must be devoted to such recruitment activities, the committee suggests that faculty target external locations and internal programs with likely transfers in a strategic way. We recommend that the program continue to consider ways to use existing resources (e.g., the fashion show) to highlight the unique opportunities of the program in their recruiting efforts. The committee also suggests that the program work with the Office of Admissions to gather data regarding the reasons that many accepted students chose to go elsewhere.

Continue to focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. While the committee recognizes the efforts to increase the gender and ethnic diversity of faculty and students within the program, the committee encourages the program to continue to pursue its goals related to further developing an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. We encourage the program to continue refining and implementing their plans for recruiting students from groups who are traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline. We note that many of the recruitment strategies are described at the department level, and we recommend that the program faculty explore the use of program-specific recruitment strategies (e.g., program-specific scholarships). Furthermore, we encourage the program faculty to continue to examine ways to infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion into the curriculum.

Continue to focus on student success and retention. The committee notes that the time to degree statistics for students completing the program are above university averages. However, the committee also notes that student fall-to-fall retention rates have typically been lower (an average of 71.2 percent) than the university average over the same time (an average of 81.2 percent). The committee recommends that the program faculty develop a plan for student success and retention. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around "student success" by defining the program's goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other plans (e.g., retention, curriculum, alumni engagement). The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure and content to remain current with changes in the field and to maintain program retention and graduation rates (including the percentage of graduates completing the program within four years). The committee recommends that the program continue monitoring student retention, particularly of students from traditionally underrepresented groups. The committee encourages the program to continue developing opportunities for student research and creative activities. The committee suggests that faculty members investigate student interest and participation in the Honors program to ensure that students desiring to complete the program with honors have sufficient opportunities to do so.

Continue to review and revise the curriculum. The committee recognizes substantial work by faculty members to review and update the program and its curriculum, especially with respect to responding to accreditation standards and trends within the discipline. The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure and content to remain current with changes in the field. The committee encourages the program to clarify the research and creative activity components of the curriculum and to explore potential collaborations with other units (e.g., Creative Technologies and the School of Theater and Dance).

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection related to fashion design and merchandising to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the Department and the Library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and

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I-Share lending, among faculty and students. We also recommend that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to develop a tiered approach for information fluency learning outcomes for the Department, align those outcomes to the curricula, and integrate those outcomes into the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program.

Continue to refine a plan for alumni tracking and engagement. While program faculty have been successful at increasing scholarships through donations from alumni, the committee encourages the faculty to continue to refine their plan for tracking program alumni and use this system to enhance alumni networking and engagement. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program's alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni, employers, and other external stakeholders in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students and providing employment opportunities for program graduates.