

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM: Fashion Merchandising (BA)

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BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED:

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.

The major in fashion merchandising focuses on retail buying, product development, and fashion promotion, which includes visual merchandising, public relations and fashion events, and writing and media. Graduates attain positions such as department manager, assistant manager, assistant buyer, and fashion events coordinator. Liberal Arts Core requirements sharpen communication and organization skills; ample provision for elective choices permits a variety of minors. Many students choose a minor in business administration, communication, media design, or fashion design.

The required internship in the senior year brings students valuable experience with department stores, retail shops, clothing manufacturers, and distributors. Students in fashion merchandising participate in the Marymount Fashion Club; activities sponsored by the Fashion Group International of Greater Washington, DC, Inc.; and fashion shows on and off campus.

There is an opportunity to study product development related to prominent businesses and agencies, such as Nordstrom, L.L. Bean, and Cotton Incorporated. Fashion merchandising students plan and produce the annual student fashion show, *Portfolio in Motion*.

Seniors complete a seminar in which merchandising problems are solved using the case method. The case analysis is sometimes evaluated by representatives of industry. Upon successful completion of the fashion merchandising program, students will be able to

- identify and foster salable apparel based on quality, appropriateness, price, target market, and aesthetic appearance, for the purpose of retail buying;
- promote apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations, and fashion events;
- 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; and
- conduct merchandising research and consumer and data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.

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.	2012-13 (in its previous wording, (omitting visual		2019-2020*

	merchandising)		
Promoted apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events. 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.	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
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.	Never		2019-2020*
Conduct merchandising research, consumer and data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.	2016-2017		2018-2019

**Adjusted outcome to reflect revision to the program curriculum*

Describe briefly how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan (*generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points*):

Based in the School of Design, Arts and Humanities the fashion merchandising program focuses on retail buying, product development, and fashion promotion, which includes visual merchandising, public relations, fashion events planning, and writing for written and visual media. Course work integrates both visual and written skills for communicating brand identify and marketing, fashion forecasting and retail business buying, and sales promotion. The program promotes inquiry-based learning through student-faculty collaboration in Marymount’s fashion show, Portfolio in Motion. The fashion show allows students to develop applicable professional development in areas of show coordinators and specialists in sound, choreography, lighting, set design, marketing and public relations. The show promotes greater awareness of Marymount and enhances its reputation, strengthens Marymount’s ties to the greater community, promotes a sense of community among students, alumni, faculty and staff, and reinforces recruitment and retention of undergraduate students who are able to succeed and contribute to the Marymount community. 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. Through their research and travel with the CGE and interaction in local embassy events, students become well aware of the global trends in fashion.

Currently, the program is going through a restructure of the fashion merchandising curriculum. The new program offerings will provide fundamental skills and knowledge in 1st and 2nd year courses. 3rd and 4th year level courses will expand upon the knowledge and skills learned in lower level courses and will introduce students to research-based learning that develops strong critical analyses skills and inquiry thinking. Emphasis will be given to global and sustainable market demands, brand identity and value equity, current retail business practices engaging experiential selling models and social media markets, social engagement and ethical business practices that align the program more purposefully with the mission and strategic plan of Marymount University in “intellectual curiosity, service to others, and global perspective”.

Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements to the process, and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment (*generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points*):

With the retirement of two senior level faculty this summer and only one faculty member returning in a tenure-track positon (Fashion Design faculty), student work and rubrics created to evaluate student performances were not done and/or provided.

The new chair, new faculty and returning faculty have done several evaluations of the program, looking at the following: senior graduating surveys, course evaluation concerns (only concerns that came up multiple times), course descriptions and objectives, and returning faculty ideas of where the strengths of the program lie and where there are concerns.

With the development of the new /revised program new learning outcomes will be developed and methods for assessing the outcomes.

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>
Promote apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events.	The confirmation of sound learning for this outcome reinforces the department's decision to identify fashion promotion as an outcome or area of specialization in the major and reflects the worth of consolidating visual merchandising into that objective. Faculty should consider recommending related electives in art for the student who wants to emphasize visual merchandising, in business for those who want to focus on buying and communication and communication media design for those interested in fashion writing and media.	No evidence was shown that this planned improvement has been currently applied into program courses. The new revisions to the program will NOT concentrate on the promotion of apparel; but the promotion of lifestyle goods that include apparel, accessories, textiles/linens and home goods. Current market trends show the industry is moving this direction. Courses will respond with writing for the media and public relations (one course developed to be writing intensive) and branding/visual merchandising techniques.
Conduct merchandising research and consumer data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.	More consumer data analysis should be implemented in AA407 Product Development II, where a consumer market is consulted for needs and preferences before students design an apparel product.	No evidence was shown that this outcome needed to be implemented in AA 407. The faculty who have taught the course for the past two years said it had always been part of the course content. However, research-based design for critical thinking will be developed into the curriculum for Fall 2019 implementation. Part of the process will be reviews/critiques with industry professionals along with faculty to assess appropriate applications of research findings to solve a merchandising problem

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

Comment: If you can find a way to collect a direct measure with multiple evaluators it would strengthen the assessment. In addition, your analysis is very basic and you need to take the time to review your results and make improvements based on those results.

Response: With two senior level faculty leaving the fashion design and merchandising department summer 2018, no assessment tools were provided to assess the 2017/2018 academic year in the fashion merchandising program. However, after looking at multiple student graduation surveys, faculty course evaluations, interviews with returning faculty, review of curriculum and advising multiple students at the beginning of the fall 2018 semester the fashion faculty have determined the curriculum in the fashion design program needs to be restructured. New assessment outcomes and tools will be created that include direct measures from multiple evaluators that include faculty and industry professionals.

Outcomes Assessment 2017-2018

Learning Outcome 1: Promoted apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events.

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 how the data was collected and describe the 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>
Indirect Measure --Review of the following: 2017 and 2018 graduating student surveys, faculty course evaluations from fall 2017 and spring 2018, interviews with two full-time returning faculty, review of current curriculum, advising students in fashion design at the beginning of the fall 2018 semester.	No defined performance standard.	See the breakdown of data below	See the breakdown of analysis below

Interpretation of Results

The following indirect assessments were done using the following information: 2017 and 2018 graduating student surveys, faculty course evaluations from spring 2018, interviews with two full-time returning faculty, review of current curriculum, and advisements of students in fashion merchandising at the beginning of the fall 2018 semester.

1. 2017 graduating student surveys were favorable. Means averaged between 3.5 to 4.5 using a 0-5 Lickert scale. In addition, of the 16 students surveyed, all identified they had a job upon graduation --6 identified a fulltime job, the remaining students identify part-time job. Only 3 of the 16 students identify a salary of \$30,000+ with 6 identifying a salary of \$10,00 or less. Additionally, when looking at the positions held – 46% held a sales associate position in retail businesses (positions not requiring a college degree in fashion merchandising). Also, several comments were not favorable to the curriculum/program – identifying the failure to learn all necessary content for a fashion merchandising degree. The 2018 surveyed 17 students and were as favorable of the program as found in 2017; however, the employment outlook was more discouraging – only 4 identified having a full-time position, 7 a part-time position and 6 unemployed. Of the 11 employed, they identify a salary of \$20,000 or less. Additionally, when looking at the positions held – 65% of the students held a sales associate position in retail businesses or a position that had no relationship to fashion merchandising. Several concerning comments focused on the program curriculum was out dated (teaching only brick-and-mortar and internet marketing practices) – failing to provide the necessary training to obtain jobs above sales associate positions. Additional comments for concern included failure to teach current digital technology in the field (i.e. Photoshop and InDesign) and Excel (an industry standard), and bad advising advise.

2. Faculty course evaluations backed up the student survey comments in regards to Excel skill in the curriculum and failure to teach current retail merchandising practices.
- Excel comments: Multiple evaluation comments address students were left to learn Excel in a course that uses an outdated book based on an outdated Excel program. In addition, it was identified several times faculty did not know how to use digital technology and/or Excel to help students apply these skills throughout the program
 - Current practice comments: Addressed failure of courses to integrate current market practices using social media and other retail strategies beyond traditional brick-and-mortar and online sales and practices.

3. Interviews with returning faculty alluded to the same as found in surveys and evaluations, that is: 1) need to teach more current retail merchandising practices, 2) a lack of research-based design applied to market forecasting and brand strategies, 3) the need for multiple digital design technology courses and taught earlier in the program, and 4) the need to teach Excel in the earlier years and use the program throughout the program

4. Review of current curriculum reinforced the findings from graduating student surveys and course evaluations concerning the lack of courses in digital design technology and retail merchandising course content that integrates current market practices beyond traditional brick-and-mortar and online sales and practices.

5. Advising students for fall courses or review of current program plans has shown numerous course substitutions or independent studies to substitute content. This has created confusion and has watered-down the degree.

Briefly describe program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

Graduating student surveys identify the strength of the program lies in the Portfolio in Motion fashion show and the students professional experience gained from participation in the show. This is the gem of the program.

Areas for improvement include the following:

- revise course content to provide current industry practices and research-based design for students to effectively forecast design trends, understand current movements in the market, understand brand and value identity, and current market practices.
- Introduce professionals into review/critique process for presentations of ideas (especially in 3rd and 4th level courses);
- Increase the number of courses to teach digital technology and Excel skills and to provide these courses earlier in the program (1st and 3rd year);

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

The program will be restructured for implementation Fall 2019. Program restructure will be based on the following:

- 1st and 2nd year students will be introduced to foundational courses that incorporate knowledge and skill level courses. These courses will concentrate on basic sewing and garment construction knowledge; textile properties and processes knowledge; visual communication of creative solutions in visual merchandising and sales marketing and promotion; historic knowledge and critical skills for forecasting design trends; digital technology skills for marketing and promotional presentations; and Excel skills for data analysis.
 - 3rd and 4th year courses will incorporate research-based design (industry standard) that involves research, analysis and application of findings to solve merchandising problems. Global, cultural and sustainable challenges will be included in project outcomes.
 - An additional writing intensive (WI) courses will be developed into the program. The WI's will be developed for writing for media and public relations.
 - More integration of digital technology that includes The Adobe CC suites – Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign
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