Program: B.S. Textiles, Apparel and Merchandising (TAM)

I. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Broadly the purpose of the Textiles, Apparel and Merchandising undergraduate program is to educate students about (1) how apparel/dress in its various forms meets physical and social-psychological needs of individuals and society and (2) how the apparel industry functions to deliver products to consumers in order to meet these needs. Graduates of the program will be prepared for successful careers in the apparel industry or graduate academic studies in the textiles and apparel discipline. Program objectives include:

1. Apparel Product Knowledge: Apply social science theories and scientific approaches in the examination of textiles, apparel products and consumer behavior. Specific learner objectives include:

   i. Identify the various factors that shape design trends in apparel fashions and related products. Identify theories used to explain fashion change and diffusion and the socio-historical contexts upon which they are based. Apply these theories in anticipating the source and direction of future fashion trends.

   ii. Apply knowledge of properties associated with different fibers, yarns, fabrications, and finishes in anticipating textile performance and serviceability for specific end use products.

   iii. Define performance standards and specifications and explain how they are used in the apparel industry. Implement standardized procedures for assessing textile product performance and quality.

   iv. Demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of design that determine aesthetic characteristics of textile and apparel products as well as environments for selling these products. Identify style archetypes for garment components upon visual inspection and using appropriate terminology.

2. Apparel Industry Knowledge: Examine the apparel industry from multiple contexts (e.g., economic, political) and perspectives (consumer, professional, manufacturer, retailer, national/global). Specific learner objectives include:
i. Describe the structure of the apparel industry and how the various components of manufacturing and retailing function together to deliver products to the end-use consumer.

ii. Understand the global nature of the apparel industry and explain the impact of relevant policies and regulations on trade.

iii. Apply social science concepts and theories as frameworks for studying consumer behavior. Utilize consumer research in solving problems in the merchandising of apparel products.

iv. Apply basic mathematical concepts used in merchandise assortment planning, pricing, inventory management, and sales evaluation.

3. Professional Practice: Apply textiles, apparel, consumer and industry knowledge in the merchandising of apparel products through various social structures (individual, collaborative, team) and professional processes (communication, critical thinking, problem solving, ethical decision making). Specific learner objectives include:

   i. Communicate effectively orally, in writing, and through visual presentations.

   ii. Work independently and as part of a team.

   iii. Draw appropriate conclusions from gathered evidence.

   iv. Apply learned concepts in the critical evaluation of information.

   v. Interact effectively and professionally with diverse others.

   vi. Demonstrate an awareness of and personal philosophy toward ethical professional practices.
II. EXPLANATION OF METHODS

The following table describes the various methods currently used in gathering assessing data. (D) = Direct measure, (I) = Indirect measure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Objective Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-Op &amp; Internship Evaluations</td>
<td>Evaluations of student intern performance by:</td>
<td>End of spring and summer semesters, when the internship course (FCNS 474 or 365E) is offered.</td>
<td>Internship faculty supervisor.</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• site supervisor (D)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• faculty supervisor (I)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• student intern. (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni survey</td>
<td>University survey</td>
<td>One year, five years, and ten years after graduation.</td>
<td>Department Chair.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty evaluation of syllabi and curriculum</td>
<td>Evaluation of course syllabi and the TAM curriculum as a whole in light of developments in the industry, research, university education, student characteristics, and assessment feedback. (I)</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
<td>Faculty as a whole with particular responsibility for specific courses assigned to the faculty member teaching the course.</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement information.</td>
<td>Information regarding initial employment upon graduation, career development, and graduate school attendance of TAM alumni. (I)</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
<td>All TAM faculty members.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student product and performance-based assessment</td>
<td>Evaluation of selected assignments, projects and test items. (D)</td>
<td>Fall and spring semester</td>
<td>All TAM faculty members.</td>
<td>1,2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


OUTCOMES-BY- METHODS – table demonstrating which outcomes are addressed by each method of assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Op &amp; Internship Evaluations</th>
<th>Alumni survey</th>
<th>Faculty evaluation of syllabi and curriculum</th>
<th>Placement information</th>
<th>Written assignments &amp; test items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apparel Product Knowledge</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel Industry Knowledge</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Practice</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. AVAILABLE DATA

Co-Op and Internship Evaluations. Activities over the last several years. Completion of student intern performance evaluations by the site supervisor and student self-evaluations are requirements of the TAM internship (FCNS 474) and co-op (FCNS 365E) experiences. The internship coordinator shares site supervisor and student self evaluations with the TAM faculty as a whole. While evaluations have been completed in the spring semester and summer session, comprehensive data have not been regularly collected from all supervisors.

Findings. Generally internship site supervisor evaluations rate students very well.

Alumni survey. Activities from 2006 to 2009. In addition to the alumni survey issued by the university, the School of Family, Consumer and Nutrition Sciences distributed a supplemental survey annually to one-year-out alumni for the purpose of evaluating individual FCNS programs from the perspective of graduates (TAM students who had completed degrees in 2003-2006). This survey was discontinued in 2008 because of very low response rates. Data from NIU annual and 5-year-out surveys of graduates, however, continues to be collected.

Findings. Regarding the FCNS annual survey, response rates by TAM alumni have been extremely low (approximately 6%). However, based on the responses which were received, areas in which the TAM program consistently rated highly (85% - 100% agree/strongly agree) in being “as well prepared as my fellow employees,” “having sufficient knowledge of subject matter” and in “opportunities to develop leadership skills.” Areas that were rated “moderately” (i.e., approx. 40% - 70% agree/strongly agree) included alums being skilled in face-to-face and written communication, use of technology, knowledge of ethical practice
and ability to work with diverse groups. Selected data gathered from the one-year-out and five-years-out surveys distributed by the University appear below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent with job closely related or related to TAM major.</th>
<th>2004 1 year out</th>
<th>2005 1 year out</th>
<th>2006 1 year out</th>
<th>2007 1 year out</th>
<th>5 years out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income.</td>
<td>$29,500</td>
<td>$34,400</td>
<td>$36,600</td>
<td>$38,000</td>
<td>$44,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation of faculty syllabi and curriculum.** Activity this past year. During 2008-2009, both individually and as a group faculty reviewed the TAM curriculum with regard to TAM program objectives and course syllabi. Specific attention was given to examining the program and specific courses with regard to the use of apparel industry-based technology. Also in 2009, a TAM faculty member conducted on-site visits with apparel industry representatives in New York regarding curriculum components. There was a general consensus among all of those visited that software knowledge and application was an essential skill for entry-level and advanced-level positions in the industry. The majority of firms visited, which included designers of clothing and fabric, manufacturers, merchandisers, and forecasters, used *Adobe Creative Suite (CS4)* and *Photoshop*. Applications in CS4 which were especially important include *Illustrator* and *InDesign*. Faculty concluded that the integration of apparel-based technology was essential to the professional knowledge and skills of students.

**Findings.** Faculty concluded that the integration of apparel-based technology was essential to the professional knowledge and skills of students.

**Placement information.** Activities over the last several years. Students' internship placements are tracked through the FCNS 474 course. The majority of information we obtain at the area or program level regarding student job placement after graduation is continually and informally gathered through one-on-one communications between faculty members and alums. We also keep abreast of the professional activities of alumni as they continue to look to the TAM program at NIU to recruit students and graduates for work in their various places of business. Alumni also return to campus to serve as guest speakers for TAM classes.

**Findings.** TAM alumni continue to find career success in the apparel industry. In the Chicago area, students generally find employment in the general categories of apparel retailing and merchandising or apparel product development. A sample of the types of positions held by recent TAM interns and alums below.
Position or Employment Area
Showroom Assistant
Showroom assistant
Executive Trainee
Design Assistant
Merchandise Team Leader
Assistant Buyer Trainee
Visual Merchandiser
Assistant Analyst
Fashion Stylist
Assistant Store Manager

Company
The Apparel Center
The Merchandise Mart
Kohl’s Corporation
The Apparel Center
Target, Inc.
Saks Fifth Avenue
Forever 21
Claire's Stores Incorporated
Hallmark Channel
The Gap

Assignments, projects, presentations, and test items reviewed by TAM faculty included:
fashion trend projects, lab reports, retailing and design trends projects and selected test items
related to textiles, apparel and merchandising. These student product/performance items
were reported in the annual assessment reports and are summarized in this section.

Student learning objective 1 ii, “Apply knowledge of properties associated with different
fibers, yarns, fabrications, and finishes in anticipating textile performance and serviceability
for specific end use products,” was assessed in 2006-2007. Students matched five textile
fibers to their respective properties and end uses. The criteria (75% of the class would
answer each item correctly) was met for the same two natural fibers and one man-made fiber
in both sets of questions. For the remaining two man-made fibers, the class did not meet the
criteria in either set of questions.

In 2007-2008, Program Objective 1, i, “Demonstrate an understanding of the elements and
principles of design that determine aesthetic characteristics of textile and apparel products as
well as environments for selling these products” (student ability to identify style archetypes
for garment components upon visual inspection and using appropriate terminology)
was assessed.

Findings. Eight test items in each of four exams given in FCNS 262 (Design trends in
western costume) exams were analyzed to determine student performance. These items
involved the identification of historical periods in response to images of costume as found in
primary evidence (i.e., artifact from the period in question). The performance goal was set
that 85% of student responses for the selected test items would be correct. Results were
averaged across items, with the following percent scores for each of the four exams: exam 1,
88%, exam 2 = 72%, exam 3, 69%, exam 4. 78%. Students met the performance goal for
only the first exam.

Also in 2007-2008, student learning objective 3, v, “Interact effectively and professionally
with diverse others,” was assessed by examining specific items from the cooperative
education site supervisor of student performance in FCNS 356E, Cooperative Education in
Textiles, Apparel and Merchandising. The performance goal was that 90% of students would be rated as above average or good (4) or 5 (very good) by their co-op site supervisor for item 7: "ability to interact with diverse others in terms of age, cultural group etc."

Findings. Based on an analysis of scores for the eight students enrolled in the course in Spring, 2008, the average score was 4.75/5.0 for item 7. Students were judged to have met this objective.

In 2008-2009, Program Objective 2, iv, "Apply basic mathematical concepts used in merchandise assortment planning, pricing, inventory management, and sales evaluation," was assessed. The technique used was analysis of an in-depth final examination question from FCNS 470, Fashion merchandising.

Findings. Results were that 100% of students (N=13) gave the correct answer to this question.

Also in 2008-2009, Program Objective 2, iii, "Apply social science concepts and theories as frameworks for studying consumer behavior. Utilize consumer research in solving problems in the merchandising of apparel products," was assessed. The techniques used was evaluation by means of a rubric of a consumer merchandising project completed in FCNS 468, Consumer behavior related to apparel. Aspects analyzed were the quality of the proposal, quality of supporting data, feasibility of execution, logic and flow of proposal. Sum scores were analyzed for nine group projects.

Findings. The average score was 16 (range of 14-18 points) out of 20 possible points. Six of the nine projects scored at the benchmark category of 85% and above.

IV. USE OF RESULTS

The previous program review (2005) identified the need for a designated computer-based lab to support the TAM program. More recent results further support the need for the integration of apparel-based technology related to both product development and retailing/merchandising components of the program. Funding was sought and obtained to support an existing lab space (CHHS Computer Lab in Wirtz 307). Program objectives and courses are currently under review in order to further integrate technology within the curriculum.

Regarding the course-based assessment results reported above, efforts were made to modify teaching methods to help students master their knowledge of man-made fibers (2006-07 data).

Following the 2007-2008 results, the instructor of FCNS 262 strengthened instruction in visually "deconstructing" and identifying costume images. Methods included in-class participation activities.
Following the 2008-2009 results, data were shared with program faculty regarding student ability to apply basic mathematical concepts. Additional evidence related to this program objective will continue to be monitored. Minimally both formative and summative assessment is needed.

V. Gaps in Current Data

There are multiple gaps in the current data. While multiple data sources have been identified there has not be a sufficiently systematic collection of data. Staff changes have resulted in the loss of some data. TAM faculty need to further review/revise the TAM assessment plan so that data can be systematically obtained and analyzed to inform program decision making.

Particular items that need to be re-evaluated include (1) student knowledge of man-made fibers (2) student ability to identify style archetypes for garment components upon visual inspection and using appropriate terminology (3) Faculty need to further review expected performance levels in relation to Program Objective 2, iv (mathematical concepts). (4) Faculty need to develop a more specific rubric to measure Program Objective 2, iii (apply social science concepts...), and to review expected program performance levels in relation to this objective.

VI. Timeline

A TAM assessment committee has been formed and will begin their work in October, 2009. Specific tasks for the committee for 2009-2010 will include:
- Review NIU requirements for program assessment.
- Review the program objectives and course syllabi. Make recommendations for changes, if needed.
- Review the existing assessment plan - including:
  o Identify specific data sources/methods and persons directly responsible for collecting and recording data.
  o Develop a system for reporting data results each semester to the program coordinator.
  o Identify selected rubrics (criteria/ratings) to be revised and/or developed in order to obtain appropriate data.
- Revise assessment plan as needed.
- Present the plan to all TAM faculty and solicit feedback.
- Collect data needed for 2009-2010.

VII. Additional resources needed

$1540 is requested for a 20-hour graduate assistant (May 15-June 30) to assist in the collection and analysis of data.
$2000 is requested as a stipend to pay a faculty member (or members) to develop a new assessment plan and design and oversee the data collection. Of this money, $1000 is requested for Spring semester, 2010 and $1000 is requested for May 15-June 30, 2010.