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The Curriculum Content of Master's Level Fashion Merchandising Programs Throughout the United States

Christine Aulicino
Old Dominion University

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THE CURRICULUM CONTENT OF MASTER'S LEVEL FASHION
MERCHANDISING PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES

A RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES AT OLD
DOMINION UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIEMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE

BY
CHRISTINE AULICINO

JULY 2004

APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Christine Aulicino under the direction of Dr. John Ritz in OTS 636. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment for the Degree of Master of Science with a concentration in Business and Industry Training.

APPROVED BY: John Ritz
Dr. John Ritz
Graduate Program Director
Occupational and Technical
Studies

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Date

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Fashion merchandising has been a field of study in the Occupational and Technical Studies Department at Old Dominion University since 1988. The fashion merchandising major has provided students with the opportunity to study all aspects of the fashion world and enter the exciting workforce in the fashion industry. Students who have wished to further their education in the fashion merchandising field have not had the opportunity to do so at Old Dominion University, since a master's program did not exist.

The continuing education opportunities for these students were to apply to a master's program in another emphasis in the Occupational and Technical Studies Department or to earn a master's in a related field such as Business Administration. The choices given were not always what the students wanted to pursue. Many felt they were not prepared for the courses offered within those degrees, or they were just not interested in those fields of study. In addition, the lack of some undergraduate courses, such as finance and accounting, made them unable to pursue a master's degree in business immediately, without completing the prerequisites.

The final option for these students was to find another university, which offered a master's degree in fashion merchandising. There is not an abundance of fashion merchandising programs throughout the United States, and it may have been hard for a student to completely relocate to get their master's degree. Therefore, there was a need for a fashion merchandising emphasis to be built into the Occupational and Technical Studies Department curriculum.

According to the institutional records available on the Old Dominion University

website, there were seventy-four students enrolled in the undergraduate fashion-merchandising program, Fall 2003 (2004). The institutional records also showed that in the past five years, an average of sixty-seven students have been a part of the program each year (2004). Based on these numbers, which have been steadily increasing, there was a growing need for a master's program with a fashion concentration, in the Occupational and Technical Studies Department at Old Dominion University. Therefore, the department needed to formulate curriculum content that would be challenging and acceptable for this major to be incorporated into their program.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine the curriculum content of master's level fashion merchandising programs throughout the United States.

RESEARCH GOALS

The following objectives were established to answer this problem:

1. Identify the schools offering master's degrees in fashion merchandising.
2. Identify the courses offered within master's programs at different schools.
3. Identify the requirements needed for students to graduate from schools with fashion merchandising master's programs.
4. Determine the mission of graduate programs in fashion merchandising.
5. Determine specific courses needed to be offered by Old Dominion University in order to produce a respected graduate fashion merchandising program.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The fashion merchandising undergraduate program at Old Dominion University has been increasing enrollment at a steady pace during the past decade. Members of the department faculty have recognized this growth trend. In addition, faculty noticed a number of their students wanting to further their education in the field of fashion merchandising.

Wolfe (2003) defines Fashion Merchandising as “The planning, buying, and selling of apparel and accessories (p. 571)”. Fashion merchandising students have had the opportunity to join the ever changing and very competitive world of the fashion industry. Upon graduation, they have found rewarding jobs in fashion, marketing, management and advertising. Graduates of fashion merchandising programs have held jobs as retailers, buyers, merchandisers, and store managers in addition to many others (Careers, 2004).

Stone (2001) notes that the millions of people employed by the fashion industry prove how much the interest in the business of fashion has increased dramatically in the past few years. Every year, large numbers of young women and men have entered the fashion business. According to Vogt (2002), there have been more career opportunities for people holding at least a bachelor’s degree in fashion or a related field, than for those who do not. Yet, he also noted that a growing number of job opportunities required employees to hold a master’s degree. For example, a student who was looking to go into a career of fashion consulting must hold a master’s degree. Vogt (2002) also noted that employers who offered jobs in the category of merchandise managers and coordinators were also more likely to hire those applicants holding a master’s degree.

Previous to the implementation of this study, Netherton and Davis, faculty members of the Occupational and Technical Studies Department, considered the need for a fashion merchandising program. They determined some courses they felt were necessary to add to the curriculum. These faculty members created a general outline of courses to incorporate, but no research has been conducted on content. In addition, these faculty members had no information on what would be a substantial amount of work to properly educate a master's level student (Personal communication, Netherton, January 2004). Therefore, it was imperative that the curriculum of other fashion merchandising graduate programs be analyzed in order to determine what should be the mandatory course requirements at Old Dominion University. The faculty of the department felt that many students would remain a part of their department post-graduation, if this concentration was offered (Personal Communication, Netherton, January 2004).

This study researched different course offerings by schools with graduate level fashion merchandising programs throughout the entire country. The courses were compared, and a tentative list of course summaries were created. Upon completion, the curriculum was presented to the Occupational and Technical Studies department faculty at Old Dominion University. This research helped to provide a frame of reference toward the implementation of a graduate fashion merchandising concentration at Old Dominion University.

LIMITATIONS

Identifying all schools in the United States, with a fashion merchandising graduate program, was not possible. Due to greater research capabilities, such as the

Internet, the researcher was able to identify a number of schools fitting the criteria. Not all schools had complete curriculum and course data available on the World Wide Web. Due to this lack of information, the researcher had to contact schools for more information. Not every school contacted provided the researcher with the information requested.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. Schools researched completed their own research in order to implement their programs.
2. Upon implementation of a master's concentration there was sufficient interest in the program by students.
3. The findings of this research would be used to create a graduate fashion merchandising concentration.

PROCEDURES

The Internet was the main source used by the researcher to collect and analyze data. A list of course offerings, course descriptions, program missions and graduation requirements were collected from the schools where it was available. The findings were then analyzed for patterns and course offering which frequented multiple school curriculums. Differences within program requirements were also taken into consideration. In addition, fashion merchandising professors were also interviewed. They provided feedback on types of courses they recommended being added to the curriculum. From the compiled information, the researcher formulated a general curriculum. This curriculum was presented to the Occupational and Technical Studies

Department, for consideration to be incorporated into the graduate program.

DEFENITION OF TERMS

The following terms were defined to assist the reader:

1. Buyer- “One who is responsible for the selection and purchase of goods for a company” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 586).
2. Consultant- “A person using their expertise in the field of fashion to help fashion companies improve their performance” (Vogt, 2002, p. 169).
3. Course- “A number of lectures or other matter dealing with a subject” (*Merriam-Webster*, 2004).
4. Curriculum- “A set of courses constituting an area of specialization” (*Merriam-Webster*, 2004).
5. Fashion Coordinator- “One who ensures the consistency of various fashion stores or departments” (Vogt, 2002, p. 106).
6. Fashion Merchandising- “The planning, buying, and selling of apparel and accessories” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 571).
7. Merchandiser- “An executive who determines the fashion direction of the business, and communicates the information throughout the organization” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 571).
8. Occupational and Technical Studies Department- An academic unit at Old Dominion University, offering degrees in the fields of fashion, industrial technology, training, marketing education and technology education.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter I of this study revealed the need for a graduate fashion merchandising program in the Occupational and Technical Studies Department at Old Dominion University. It discussed why department faculty felt there was such a need for this degree, and the steps they have already taken toward the implementation of the program. It also described the critical data that were analyzed in order to create an appropriate program. In addition, the use of the Internet as the prime research tool was presented. The researcher also provided the plan for presentation of the findings to the department faculty.

The following chapters provide information that has been previously gathered about several master's fashion merchandising programs. Literature about the topic is reviewed and documented. Background information on fashion merchandising had also been examined. The data collected on specific programs had been analyzed and their programs were compared. A presentation of the findings as well as recommendations to the Department of Occupational and Technical Studies were also presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter II described the literature reviewed to evaluate the curriculum content of graduate fashion merchandising and apparel programs. This review was preformed because no adequate research has been conducted to provide a framework for graduate fashion merchandising programs. Through various research methods, information on eighteen graduate programs was collected. More than eighteen schools with the appropriate major existed, yet not all had enough data available to be included in the research. Through the analysis of the data, the focus was narrowed to nine programs for further examination. Chapter II was organized in four sections, based on the research goals:

1. Identify the schools offering master's degrees in fashion merchandising.
2. Identify the courses offered within master's programs at different schools.
3. Identify the requirements needed for students to graduate from schools with fashion merchandising master's programs.
4. Determine the mission of graduate programs in fashion merchandising.

SCHOOLS OFFERING MASTER'S DEGREES IN FASHION MERCHANDISING

Throughout the United States, over twenty universities offered fashion merchandising for candidates seeking a master's degree. The degree is most often offered as a Master of Science, while other schools categorized it as a Master of Fine Arts. Research of these schools was narrowed based on availability. The nine universities focused on throughout the research are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Schools Offering Fashion Merchandising Master's Degrees

University	Degree	Focus
Colorado State University	Master of Science	Design and Merchandising: Apparel and Merchandising Concentration
Florida State University	Master of Science	Retail Merchandising
Iowa State University	Master of Science	Textile and Apparel Merchandising/Management
Ohio State University	Master of Science	Consumer Aspects of Textiles and Clothing
University of Akron	Master of Fine Arts	Clothing, Textiles, and Interior: Merchandising Emphasis
University of Kentucky	Master of Science	Merchandising
University of Nebraska Lincoln	Master of Science	Textiles, Clothing and Design: Merchandising Focus
University of North Texas	Master of Science	Merchandising
University of Rhode Island	Master of Science	Fashion Merchandising

COURSES OFFERED WITHIN MASTER'S PROGRAMS

An abundance of courses were available from the universities researched. Most universities had diverse core curriculum and elective courses. Course titles varied, but from the analysis of course descriptions, general course topics were determined.

All universities analyzed emphasized that students needed to have research capabilities. Every curriculum included a research methods course. Some included statistics in the research course, while others required students to take an additional statistics course. Traditional fashion courses including buying, aesthetics, design, merchandising, textiles, and visual merchandising were core courses which frequented

merchandising curriculums. All programs emphasized students need for knowledge in fashion history and cultures. Programs also required students to analyze the sociological and psychological aspects of clothing and society.

With a constantly expanding marketplace, universities were aware of the need for merchandising students to have a strong background in the global fashion industry.

Rapid technological advances also made it necessary to incorporate e-commerce into most fashion curriculums. Universities researched provided an abundance of courses for students to choose from, in order to gain substantial knowledge in their field of study.

Many also encouraged the taking of electives outside of, but related to the students discipline.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to gain entrance into all fashion merchandising programs, students were required to have a sufficient background in merchandising or a closely related field.

Most universities researched required students to complete between thirty and thirty-six credit hours to become a candidate for graduation. In comparison, Ohio State University required their students to complete forty-five credit hours to graduate.

Florida State University, The University of Nebraska, and the University of Rhode Island provided students with the opportunity to have a non-thesis option for their degree requirements. Yet, three to six additional credit hours, depending on the university, were required for completion. The students who choose to take the thesis option received three to six credit hours towards their degree. All researched schools awarded candidates degrees only after the completion of all required credits, the passing of a comprehensive examination, and successful completion of a thesis (where required).

MISSION

Not all researched schools provided a mission or vision statement. It was important to gather this data to create the proper outlook for a possible graduate merchandising program at Old Dominion University. A mission provides prospective candidates positive information on the department and the educational outlook of the university.

There was a reoccurring theme throughout the various university departmental mission statements. Colorado State University, the University of North Texas, Florida State University, and The Ohio State University heavily emphasized research-based educational experience in their graduate programs. The University of Akron focused their mission "...on scholarship, integrity, and the betterment of the human condition". In addition to research, Florida State University emphasized that their department would "...meet the needs of individuals, families and communities for fashionable and functional apparel and textile products, profitable retail business, and successful residential environments". University of North Texas aimed their mission at "the critical analyses of merchandising strategies as they relate to the development, distribution, evaluation, and use of fashion-oriented products in the consumer-driven global market." Although diverse, all mission statements provided a positive outlook on the featured University and program.

SUMMARY

Chapter II explained the literature reviewed on fashion merchandising curriculum content. Research of nine schools was reviewed. Due to the lack of literature on the

topic, specific university programs had to be analyzed. Chapter II analyzed the programs based on school, course offerings, graduation requirements, and mission. Chapter III discusses the methods and procedures practiced by the researcher in order to acquire the needed data.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of Chapter III was to provide the methods and procedures undertaken by the researcher to determine the curriculum content necessary for a Master's Fashion Merchandising program at Old Dominion University. This chapter includes the population, instrument design, methods of data collection, and a statistical analysis.

POPULATION

The population of this study consisted of various graduate fashion merchandising programs throughout the country. Many programs were investigated and the study was narrowed down to focus on the nine schools which provided the most adequate and substantial data. The universities researched included:

- Florida State University
- The University of Rhode Island
- Ohio State University
- The University of Kentucky
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- University of Akron
- Iowa State University
- Colorado State University
- The University of North Texas

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

This study was conducted based on the research goals established for this study.

Those research goals included:

1. Identify the schools offering master's degrees in fashion merchandising.
2. Identify the courses offered within master's programs at different schools.
3. Identify the requirements needed for students to graduate from schools with fashion merchandising master's programs.
4. Determine the mission of graduate programs in fashion merchandising.
5. Determine specific courses needed to be offered by Old Dominion University in order to produce a respected graduate fashion merchandising program.

The goals guided the researcher through the analysis of university websites to extract needed information. The researcher searched websites for any information relating to the research goals. Department missions, course requirements, course catalogs, class syllabi, and course description listings were all acquired when available.

Analyzed participants were chosen through the International Textile and Apparel Association Website. The Website contained a listing of all United States universities which had fashion programs. These universities were all researched and applicable programs were studied further. Personal contact was also needed to acquire adequate documentation from certain schools including the University of Rhode Island and The Academy of Art College. A list of educational institutions with fashion programs was also found in the appendix of *Career Opportunities in the Fashion Industry*. The institutions were analyzed for duplicates and additional schools found were then

researched online.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

After obtaining the needed data, required information was extracted. Although information was obtained for eighteen schools, only the nine schools with the most abundant and significant data were further analyzed. Information for each research goal was compiled into single lists. All data were then evaluated. Frequencies in topics were tabulated to find trends among the programs. All course descriptions were considered and used to make final conclusions.

SUMMARY

Chapter III provided the methods and procedures used to determine the curriculum needed to incorporate a Master's Fashion Merchandising program into the Occupational and Technical Studies Department at Old Dominion University. University websites were the main instruments used for data collection. The steps taken to acquire all necessary information were also provided. Chapter IV reports the findings from the information collected.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the curriculum content of master's level fashion merchandising programs throughout the United States. In this chapter data was presented with tables indicating the results found throughout the research conducted. The data includes findings from all of the research goals identified. The research goals include:

1. Identify the schools offering master's degrees in fashion merchandising.
2. Identify the courses offered within masters programs at different schools.
3. Identify the requirements needed for students to graduate from schools with fashion merchandising master's programs.
4. Determine the mission of graduate programs in fashion merchandising.
5. Determine specific courses needed to be offered by Old Dominion University in order to produce a respected graduate fashion merchandising program.

FINDINGS

Table II provided the Universities which offered master's degrees in fashion merchandising. Over eighteen programs in the United States offered the degree. Yet, this study narrowed the focus to the nine schools which provided the most adequate and substantial data.

Table II. Universities Offering Fashion Merchandising Master's Degrees

University of Rhode Island	University of Kentucky	Iowa State University
Florida State University	University of Nebraska-Lincoln	Colorado State University
Ohio State University	University of Akron	University of North Texas

Tables III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X and XI present the course offerings for master's degrees in the nine researched schools. Each school had a core listing of courses which were comparable to the required courses at all other schools. Individual schools offered certain elective courses which were unique to that individual program. The findings emphasized which courses would be needed to create a successful master's fashion merchandising program at Old Dominion University.

Table III. Courses offered for completion of a Master's of Fashion Merchandising at the University of Rhode Island

Departmental Courses	Supporting Coursework
Fashion Retailing Seminar	Management Courses
Fashion Theory and Analysis	Marketing Course
Fashion Merchandising Operations Control	Textiles Courses
Fashion Promotion	
Consumer Behavior in Fashion Retailing	
Cultural Aspects of dress	
Special Problems in Textiles and Clothing	
Master's Thesis Research	

Table IV. Courses Offered for Completion of a Master of Science in Retail Merchandising at Florida State University

Required Courses	Elective Courses
Clothing and Textiles Seminar	Supervised Research
Readings in Textiles and Consumer Sciences	Advanced Marketing Principles
Textile Product Research and Theory	Selected Studies in Historic Textiles
Research Analysis in Textiles and Consumer Sciences	Current Trends in Merchandising
Merchandising Theory and Research	Merchandising Organizations
Graduate Statistical Course	Advanced Buying
Thesis	Retail Technologies
	Global Textile Economics

Table V. Courses Offered for Completion of a Master of Science with an Apparel and Merchandising Concentration at Colorado State University

Required Courses	Elective Courses
Research Methods	One course (3 credits) taken outside the department
Research Based Design Solutions	Appearance, self and society
Quantitative or Qualitative analysis (taken outside the department)	Merchandising Theories and Strategies
Six Credit Thesis	Application of textile technology for application in apparel merchandising, and interior design
	Independent Study
	Internship
	Supervised College Teaching
	Group Study
	Apparel and Textile Design

Table VI. Courses Offered for Completion of a Master of Science in Merchandising at the University of North Texas

Offered Courses	
Merchandising Ventures	Consumer Theory for Merchandising
Virtual Merchandising	Merchandising Study Tour
Merchandising Practices	Human Relations in Merchandising and Hospitality Management
Research Methods in Merchandising	Merchandising Strategies
Research Applications in Merchandising	Promotional Strategies
Advanced Merchandising Applications	Concept Merchandising
Service Excellence	Global Merchandising
Electronic Merchandising	Private Label Merchandising
Field Experience	Thesis

Table VII. Courses Offered for Completion of a Master of Science in Merchandising at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

Offered Courses	
Socio-Psychological Aspects of Clothing	Professional Study Tour
Textile, Clothing and Design Problems	Independent Study
Apparel and Market Analysis	Theory and Issues in Merchandising
Textile and Apparel Merchandising	Master's Thesis
Textiles and Dress: Cultural Perspectives	
Current Issues	
Design Perspectives and Issues	
Theory Development	
Research Methods	

Table VIII. Courses Offered for Completion of a Master of Fine Arts with a Merchandising emphasis at the University of Akron.

Required Courses	Elective Courses
Orientation to Graduate Studies in Family and Consumer Sciences	History of Interior Design I and II
Historical and Conceptual Bases of Family and Consumer Sciences	Professional Image Analysis
Research Methods	Advanced Textiles
Material Culture Studies	Global Issues in Textiles and Apparel
Theories of Fashion	Textile Conservation
Social Psychology of Dress and the Near Environment	History of Costume to 1800
Master's Thesis or Project	History of Fashion Since 1780
	Flat Pattern Design
	Problems in Design
	Practicum

Table IX. Courses Offered for Completion of a Master of Science Textile and Apparel Merchandising/Management at Iowa State University.

Offered Courses	
Survey of Research in Textiles and Clothing	History of Costume and Textiles
Research (6-7 Credits)	Global Issues in Textiles and Apparel
Statistical Methods for Research Workers	Management of Small Apparel Businesses
Research Methods	Merchandising and Product Development
Functional Design for Special Needs	Merchandising topics
Apparel Design and Construction	Aesthetics of Textiles and Clothing
Aesthetics	Dress and Culture
Product Development	Social, Psychological and Aesthetic Theories of Appearance
Functional Design	Consumer Behavior Research in Textiles and Apparel
Quality Assurance of Textiles and Apparel	Advanced Textile Science
Conservation of Textiles and Costume	

Table X. Courses Offered for Completion of a Master of Science in Consumer Aspects of Textiles and Clothing at Ohio State University.

Offered Courses	
Research in Textiles, Apparel and Merchandising	Current Topics in Merchandising
Textile Science	Current Topics in Clothing
Costume and Culture	History of Textiles
History of Costume and Textiles	Current Topics in Textiles
Theories of Fashion	Textiles and Clothing Industries: Economic Appraisal

Aesthetics: Appearance Management and Self Presentation	Theories of Fashion
Social Psychological Aspects of Clothing	Methods and Theory in Historic Research

Table XI. Courses Offered for Completion of a Master of Science in Merchandising at the University of Kentucky

Required Courses	Elective Courses
Research Methods	Aesthetics in Merchandising
Survey of Current Theories and Literature	Dress and Culture
Seminar in Merchandising	Apparel Industry
Basic Statistical Analysis	Merchandising Promotion
	Merchandise Planning and Control
	Problem Solving in Merchandising
	Merchandising Strategy Analysis
	Consumer Demand in Merchandising
	International Merchandising

Each university researched had its own graduation requirements. Most programs required students to complete between thirty and thirty-nine credit hours for completion of their master's degree. Some schools also provided students with the option of thesis or non-thesis programs. Table XII presented the individual requirements for students to graduate from all nine schools.

Table XII. Requirements Needed for Students to Graduate from Schools with Fashion Merchandising Master's Programs.

School	Credits Required Thesis Option	Credits Required Non-Thesis	Additional Requirements
University of Rhode Island	30	33	N/A
Florida State University	33	39	Practicum with retail firm
Ohio State University	45 with 2 hour comprehensive exam	50 with 4 hour comprehensive exam	N/A
University of Kentucky	30	30 with project	N/A
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	33	36 with written comprehensive exam	N/A

University of Akron	40	40 with project	N/A
Iowa State University	30	36	N/A
Colorado State University	30	N/A	N/A
University of North Texas	36 With oral final exam	36 with written final exam	Thesis counts as 6 credit hours

Most universities provided mission statements on their web sites. Some only had university missions, while others had individual departmental and program missions.

Table XIII indicated the mission statements of the universities which provided them.

Table XIII. Mission Statements of Graduate Programs in Fashion Merchandising

School	Mission Statement
University of Rhode Island	"We collaboratively create, disseminate, and apply knowledge to improve practice, interpret culture, inform policy, and develop economic, educational, health, material, and social resources for individuals, children, families, communities business and industry."
Florida State University	"Through outstanding research, instructional and service programs, the department will meet the needs of individuals, families and communities for fashionable and functional apparel and textile products, profitable retail business, and successful residential environments."
Ohio State University	"Our mission is to provide excellence in research and educational programming about the consumer/industry interface in the fields of Family Resource Management, Hospitality Management, and Textiles & Clothing."
University of Kentucky	"The department's main objective is to prepare students for successful careers in the global textile and apparel industries."
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	Not Available

University of Akron	<p>“The mission of the Textiles and Clothing Program is to create and extend knowledge about design, production, distribution, promotion, and use of textiles and apparel for the people of Iowa and for the wider national and international community. Through our interdisciplinary approach to teaching, research/creative activities, extension/professional practice, and service, we address the interactions among:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes that link producers and consumers in the rapidly changing textile and apparel industry; • Products and services that satisfy requirements and expectations of producers, consumers, regulators, and businesses; and • People as consumers and as business persons with universal human concerns for aesthetic expression, communication, protection, health and safety, and productive work.”
Iowa State University	<p>“Through research-based problem solving strategies, the Department of Design and Merchandising addresses issues of design, distribution, and consumption.”</p>
Colorado State University	<p>“To integrate educational experiences and research that contribute to critical analyses of merchandising strategies as they relate to the development, distribution, evaluation, and use of fashion-oriented products in the consumer-driven global market.”</p>
University of North Texas	Not Available

SUMMARY

Chapter IV presented the findings of the research study. It listed the universities researched which offered master's programs in fashion merchandising. Also presented were course offerings for master's degrees in the nine researched universities. Other data revealed the credit hours and requirements needed for completion of each master's programs. Finally, the mission statements of the programs were offered.

Chapter V summarizes the research study. In addition, Chapter V draws conclusions based upon the research goals presented throughout the study. Recommendations were also made based upon the results of the research study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

This chapter summarized the material covered in the past four chapters.

Conclusions were drawn based on the research goals presented in Chapter I. Based on the conclusions, recommendations were made for this and future studies.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine the curriculum content of master's level fashion merchandising programs throughout the United States. Based on this study, research goals were formulated to answer the problem. The research goals were used to determine programs offering master's degrees in fashion merchandising, the courses the schools offered as graduation requirements, and mission statements. The final goal of determining specific courses needed by Old Dominion University to produce a fashion merchandising program, was used to formulate a conclusion.

The fashion industry is continually expanding. Staff of the Occupational and Technical Studies Department at Old Dominion University has realized the increasing need for fashion merchandising students in the workplace. Many students have wanted to further their studies in the merchandising field and have shown an interest in earning a master's degree in fashion merchandising. This study was needed to determine the essential elements to implement a successful graduate fashion merchandising program at Old Dominion University.

Due to low numbers of programs and lack of information, research of master's fashion merchandising programs was not abundant. The World Wide Web was the

Students must have research and statistics based courses. Programs must also provide courses in merchandising, culture, psychology of dress, history of clothing, and retailing. It was also essential that universities provide students with the opportunity to choose various elective courses relevant to the field of study.

3. Identify the requirements needed for students to graduate from schools with fashion merchandising master's programs.

In order for students to accumulate the necessary skills and education from a master's level fashion merchandising program, they must be required to take at least 30 credit hours. Students should be required to complete a project or thesis in order to fulfill the necessary graduation requirements. The student may also be presented with the opportunity to not complete a project or thesis, yet in turn they must complete a greater number of credit hours. Upon completion of the program, students should take a form of comprehensive tests, to ensure proper knowledge on the entire area of study.

4. Determine the mission of graduate programs in fashion merchandising.

Based on the findings from other universities, a fashion merchandising master's program must provide prospective and current students with a mission statement. Mission statements researched emphasized excellence in research and abundant knowledge in the merchandising field. The mission statements conveyed feelings of concern for the community, industry, and the for the improvement of the entire field.

The previous goals all aided in leading to the results of the fifth and final goal:

5. Determine specific courses needed to be offered by Old Dominion University in order to produce a respected graduate fashion merchandising program.

All of the course offerings for each university were analyzed and compared.

There were an abundance of titles and themes which reoccurred throughout each curriculum. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded which courses would be essential for a successful master's fashion merchandising program. The specific course topics which should be offered by Old Dominion University included consumer behavior, textile and apparel merchandising, electronic or virtual merchandising, marketing principles, psychological aspects of clothing, cultural aspects/global issues of clothing, history of dress, and merchandising and product development. In addition, students should have the opportunity to further their knowledge in management and marketing classes. Students must also have a research and statistics course.

RECOMENDATIONS

Due to the lack of research in the field, one can only conclude that there is a need to use other successful programs as a starting point. In order to successfully implement a fashion merchandising master's program, Old Dominion University must use other successful university programs as a benchmark. If implemented, the program must offer students an abundance of the courses found in the conclusion. In addition to the courses, it is clear that students need to have a strong knowledge for research methods and statistics. Due to the need for experience, a practicum or internship in the field may also be essential. The program of study must at least require students to take 33 credit hours

of classes, and even more if they lack prior knowledge in the field. The program should also require students to complete a thesis or graduate project. In addition, students should successfully complete a comprehensive examination to be eligible for graduation.

As more universities begin to incorporate fashion merchandising into their graduate schools, more detailed research can be conducted. As the current programs start to grow, a study should analyze the success rates of the merchandising graduates. The graduates knowledge, job opportunities, and overall satisfaction should be compared to those students getting merchandising jobs straight out of the undergraduate merchandising programs. Monitoring these factors will eventually lead to a more thorough study of graduate fashion merchandising programs.

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