



Fashion Education and Industry Partnership

By: Rachael Libolt—Palomar College

California Community Colleges have an important role in California's educational system. Without the targeted vocational education offered throughout the system the state would be severely limited in its ability to train and educate a large portion of California's population. The Apparel and Textile Industry is the largest manufacturing base and employer in Southern California. Because the goal of Family and Consumer Sciences in the Community Colleges is *to prepare individuals to function effectively in changing community and work environments* it is important that the fashion education programs stay current.

As a member of the Fashion faculty at Palomar College in North San Diego County the biggest challenge was staying abreast of the changing local industry. How many sites are there? Where are they located? Are the businesses aware of the benefits of a relationship with Palomar College? Are the Palomar students prepared for working in the current industry? And most importantly, is the fashion program preparing students to function effectively in changing community and work environments? Without knowledge of the local fashion industry, it becomes difficult to give students a comprehensive education in all areas of the fashion industry.

Recently, as a solution to this problem, the California Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Extended Education Fund approved a grant to support research for Palomar College's Fashion program. The goal of this research was to explore the Fashion Industry sites within a forty-five mile commuting distance of campus and to introduce the fashion program to these businesses. An enhanced relationship has the possibility to provide work experience sites, internships, and contacts for speakers and field trips. The students benefit from having work site experiences and gain a deeper realistic understanding of the fashion industry. *Continued on page 5*

2009 Spring Election

Deadline: May 1st, 2009

Ways to vote:

- **Mail in Ballot**

Included in the print edition of the *Contempo* newsletter will be a mail-in ballot. Please fill it out, enclose it in an envelope, and mail it to:

Dr. Allen Martin

California State University Northridge
18111 Nordhoff St. Box 8308
Northridge, CA 91330-0001

- **Online**

Visit <http://www.aafcs-ca.org/vote> if you have not already received an invitation to vote online. You will need an e-mail address to register. Please contact **Corinne Thomas** (cthomas@aafcs-ca.org) if you run into any technical issues.

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The process used to increase the connection with the fashion industry was accomplished by systematically identifying, contacting, and meeting with industry representatives in their places of work. The existing fashion industry sites were located through the use of The National Register of Apparel Manufacturers, Women, Children, Boys and Men. The digital version of the register was purchased at the Los Angeles Market Center for \$210. The information was sorted by zip code to determine the fashion industry sites within forty five minutes commuting distance from Palomar College. Ninety-eight fashion industry sites were identified. Sixty-eight of these sites are currently active.

"...it is important that the fashion education programs stay current."

A letter was sent out to each of the businesses introducing the project and Palomar College's fashion program and letting them know that the researcher would be contacting them. Immediately, several businesses responded. They had no idea that there was a fashion program in North San Diego County and were anxious to meet with me.

Each of the remaining industry sites were telephoned to discuss the program and to set up interviews. Visits were arranged with thirteen businesses over several months. A second letter accompanied by a

survey was sent asking the sites for information about their business and their interest in having interns, six additional businesses responded. E-mails were sent to six companies at their request, with limited response.

An excellent opportunity to link business with fashion education began to develop during the first two of the thirteen site visits. The first visit was with a T-shirt company called Mad Engine in rural Poway within twenty-two miles of the Palomar campus. The meeting was with Stuart Koblin V.P. of Sales and Ali Bahdoori General Manager. This T-shirt company was unknown to our program and to our surprise is a \$50 million dollar privately owned company. Mad engine sells silk screened t-shirts to stores such as Wall Mart and Target. The company was interested to learn that Palomar College's fashion program was close and a possible resource for interns and future employees.

This second visit was to "Susan Dunn," a high end resort wear manufacturer whose home office is located in Rancho Santa Fe. Currently her manufacturing plant is located on the east coast and she is in the process of re-locating the manufacturing site to North San Diego County. I introduced Palomar's fashion program to her and reviewed the scope of the classes and training provided. As a result of this meeting and further meetings with the Dean of Career Technical

and Extended Education, Wilma Owens and the Fashion Program Department Chairperson, Nancy Galli, we are exploring ways in which we can actually have classrooms within the Susan Dunn Factory. The hope is that high end tasks such as computer aided design, pattern making, size grading, video merchandising, global marketing, sourcing and color setting as well as the planning and management will be done with the assistance of students.

Because of the connections made with local business, many opportunities have developed. Three students have already been placed in exciting internship positions. Two industry guests have spoken to fashion classes. And a new web page has been constructed (<http://www.palomar.edu/fashion/fashionInternship.htm>). The web page featuring participating fashion businesses will be utilized as a directory and resource by the students and faculty for guest speakers, internships and field trips. And the opportunity to actually place fashion classrooms into an industry site is being explored.

This project truly contributed to the aims and purposes of CA-AFCS by helping to prepare students for the changing fashion work environment through enhancing the relationship with the local fashion industry. ■