**Evaluation Report on the Request for Permanent Status of the**

**Master of Science in Fashion and Apparel Studies**

**Objectives, Strength, & Weaknesses**

The Master of Science in Fashion & Apparel Studies strives to prepare graduates to become successful professionals in the global fashion industry. This Program provides 4 goals for review in the assessment plan (Appendix Program Policy Statement for the Graduate Programs in Fashion and Apparel Studies, Part III Assessment Plan); these goals are to be assessed using direct measures in the corresponding core courses that focus on social issues, responsible practices in regards to global business; along with a focus on sustainability issues. The outcome of each assessment is not directly provided in this self-study. A strength of this program is its focus on issues in the fashion industry requiring global awareness and following the principles stated in the United Nations Global Compact. This program provides several options for degree completion such as thesis and non-thesis option, along with a 4+1 option to qualified undergraduates.

In accordance with the Academic Priorities of the University, this program follows several of the guiding principles in the Path to Prominence™ such as impact and engagement and clearly contributes to the Global Initiative Milestone along with the Engaged University Milestone. Additionally this program, part of the College of Arts & Sciences, contributes to the Colleges four core values.A significant program strength is its focus on social and sustainability issues in the apparel industry, not found in any graduate apparel program in the Eastern US. Additional strengths are its affiliations with the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, of which the Department is a founding member, involvement with the Fair Labor Association, the Sustainable Textiles Cluster with partnerships in South Africa and the ongoing development of a partnership with Donghua University in China. Lastly, the diverse faculty and student population are important contributing factors to the programs focus on the global fashion industry and its success. A weakness of the program is the lack of grant or external funding from the Departments faculty to further support graduate students, as 24% of students are self-funded.

**Impact & Demand**

At this time, the program does not appear to adversely impact other programs at the University. Admission requirements for this Master Degree, thesis, non-thesis and 4+1 option are clearly stated. Additional information on preparation of the portfolio for apparel design may beneficial for potential applicants. Overall, there have been consistent but modest numbers of applicants for the programs history, with 53 total applicants from 2008-2013. Additionally, presented in the self-study is an enrollment average of 6 students per semester. Although these are modest numbers, they are inline with the number of faculty available to support the program; the Department contains 11 permanent/temporary faculty of which 1 tenure-track and 5 tenured faculty members are available. While 3 faculty have retired the Program states, student numbers will increase with the replacement of the newly retired faculty members. Toward that end, at the present time acceptance numbers would accurately represent available research assistantship positions**.** This self-study has included detailed plans to increase program visibility and applicants using professional organizations and graduate fairs. Presently, this is the only graduate program in the region offering creative problem solving, consumer behavior and themes of social responsibility and sustainability for the fashion industry along with industrial partnerships. Students are advised by the Graduate Program Director upon entering the program using new student orientation, brown bag lunches, and graduate student applicable seminars. Students continued to be mentored by an academic advisor guiding them through their thesis or professional project until degree completion. The Departments faculty actively participate in the program; hopes of expanding student support will coincide with replacing retired department members. The Department provides approximately four assistantships to master students based upon student merit. Facilities, computers and analysis software in the Department are stated to be adequate to support students, faculty, and staff research requirements for textiles, apparel design & product development, historic costume & textile collections, and textile chemistry laboratories. Additionally, the Department provides some funds to facilitate student attendance at relevant conferences. Additional student incurred costs, other than those students that are self-funded, do not appear to be an issue at this time.

**Evaluation**

Found within the Appendix (Program Policy Statement provides an assessment plan, Part III) is four program goals and many sub-goals associated with specific core courses. An overall program assessment determining if these four program goals are fulfilled has not been included in this self-study. However, social responsibility and research communication learning goals were assessed, it is unclear if this is a newly implemented assessment or has been performed annually. The self-study states the research communication learning goal has been met by evidence of successful oral thesis defense by graduates. Also, social responsibility goal assessment was conducted using student surveys to determine expected competencies. Importantly, the process by which these two program learning goals, social responsibility and research communication, are linked with the four assessment plan program goals is not clear. Nevertheless, an assessments of the career goals of recent graduates was conducted utilizing an exit survey and was completed in 2009 and 2013. Information obtained from exit surveys resulted in the implementation of the Graduate Program Director and development of student mentoring practices.

Overall, since 2008 a total 53 applicants have applied to the program, of which 36 received acceptance offers and 23 graduates have attend the program with an admission rate of 43%. To date, 7 students have completed requirements and graduated, with 11 students in progress for degree completion and 5 students have left the program. Of the graduates, 71% are currently employed in field; 36% of the student in progress have already obtained positions in the fashion industry.

**Conclusion**

***Approve for permanent status…***