Welcome to our second ARMD Program Newsletter. With the help of our editor, Keyona Elkins, we are able to continue to provide some updates about what is happening at NDSU. In this issue you’ll find information about where many of our alums are finding careers in the industry. We would like to continue this with future issues so please feel free to share your information as alums of the program. We are also highlighting the experiences of current students who studied abroad this spring in Barcelona, the Fashion, Apparel, and Student Association (FABO) group activities and our Study Tours to Florence and Los Angeles.

As promised in the last newsletter, a Group has been created on LinkedIn for our current students and graduates of the program. This has been a great way to connect and stay up to date on the activities of our graduates. If you have a LinkedIn Profile, please connect with me and I can invite you to join the group. Or you can search for the group which is NDSU Apparel, Retail Merchandising and Design. Then ask to join. Through the group site, we can post job announcements or other items that you think would be of interest to those in the group.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of the newsletter. We know that our alums provide great networking opportunities for our current students and also for each other.

Have a wonderful summer!

-Linda Manikowske

ARMD Grads Thrive at Merchology

When many of the employees at a young and growing company are NDSU Apparel, Retail Merchandising and Design graduates, you can bet that Bison pride is contributing to its success.

Merchology is a Minneapolis-based online company specializing in custom branded apparel and gifts. They work with clients from various companies to easily customize fashionable name brand apparel with their own branding and logo online. Merchology’s co-branding strategy has proven to be very successful since its start in 2013 when Apparel, Retail Merchandising and Design graduate Kylee Johnson began her career at the company.

Owner Richard Ward immediately recruited Kylee as Merchology’s third hire. To help start up the company, she uploaded products to the website and processed the initial orders. She was soon co-managing the customer service team and is now the Senior Account Manager, overseeing every order. “I have gained so much experience in two years that many would not be able to experience in five to 10 years in a large-scale corporate business,” Kylee says.

Because of the quick success Merchology has enjoyed, great employees who can help maintain their 4.9 out of 5 customer service rating have been in high demand. Since Kylee Johnson started with the company, Merchology has hired seven other ARMD graduates from NDSU: Molly Wallgren, Kylie Teske, Holland Lind, Caitlin Wohler, Jenna Berning, Laura Tonneson and Miranda Brady. As Account Specialists, they assist
customers with orders, making sure the logo color, size and placement on the products is to the client’s liking. After getting customer approval on sample stitch-outs, they place the orders with their contracted decorators.

“I was the 6th person to join the office, and so much has changed in a year and a half,” says Molly Wallgren. “I can only imagine what it will be like in another year.” “Working for a start-up is never something that crossed my mind but I am so glad I am,” says Caitlin Wohler. “We get to work through all the difficult times and see how that makes everyone and the company stronger.” Kylie Teske also enjoys the excitement of working for such a young company. “I love the fun and open culture,” she says. “The people are amazing, the environment is fast-paced and the company is growing fast.”

Jenna Berning has only been at Merchology for a few months, but she already feels like part of the team. “Everyone is so supportive of each other and has a positive attitude,” she says. Laura Tonneson, one of two recent graduates starting in June, thinks that the apparel industry knowledge and teamwork skills she has gained from the ARMD program will benefit her in Merchology’s team-focused environment, and the other graduates of the program can confirm that. “I never realized how much of my course work at NDSU would actually help me with this job,” Molly Wallgren says. “Classes like Textiles and Intro to Sewing helped me to learn about fabric and how garments are made, which helps with explaining things to customers.”

Study Abroad: Barcelona and Beyond

Barcelona, Spain is a city full of rich history, cosmopolitan culture, breathtaking architecture and a warm Mediterranean climate. In other words, it’s a far cry from Fargo, North Dakota. That’s just what Colie Winsor and Karly Maier were searching for when they decided to study abroad in Spain for the spring 2016 semester. Colie was especially looking forward to the beautiful mountains and sea, and Karly hoped to experience the unique culture and improve her Spanish skills.

The Retail Merchandising students didn’t just get to experience the sights and tastes of Barcelona; they also travelled to 15 other nearby cities including London, England; Paris, France; Athens, Greece; Rome, Italy; and Valencia, Spain during the semester. Colie loved getting to travel around Europe and said her favorite memory was seeing the Eiffel Tower at night on Valentine’s Day. “My favorite part has just been exploring Barcelona and meeting new people,” Karly said, “It’s such a big city, and you can walk to most places. I’ve loved going out with friends and practicing my Spanish. Barcelona is so much fun. It’s a safe city and extremely beautiful.”

The girls have also been taking classes in Spanish, hospitality, and marketing while abroad. Karly said her classes were similar to the ones at NDSU except that the students came from all over the world. They’ve also learned a lot about Spain’s culture, noting differences from America such as eating dinner at 9 p.m. with tapas (appetizers), taking to fashion trends quicker, and generally taking life at a more leisurely pace.

Both students agreed that studying abroad has been an eye-opening and life-changing experience. “I learn something new every day,” Colie said, “Even if it’s a simple thing, like a new word in Spanish, it's still exciting to watch yourself grow. When you're pushed outside of your comfort zone and put in a completely different culture, you find out so much about yourself.”

Career Closet Fashion Show

In March, Sara Sunderlin’s Aesthetics and Visual Analysis of Apparel Products class partnered with the NDSU Career Center to put on a professional dress fashion show. The students styled outfits using pieces from the Career Closet, a program that lets NDSU students borrow professional clothing for interviews and career fairs free of charge. The show increased awareness of this useful service while also providing apparel students with an opportunity to push their styling creativity and get experience producing a fashion show.

You can read more about the show here: [https://www.ndsu.edu/news/banner_stories/careercloset2016/](https://www.ndsu.edu/news/banner_stories/careercloset2016/)
Many Alumni at Vanity

If you’ve shopped at a Vanity store in your local mall, you’ve seen the fruits of many NDSU Apparel, Retail Merchandising and Design alumni’s labor. Vanity, the specialty retailer offering fun, affordable fashions for young women, is headquartered in Fargo, providing great career opportunities for ARMD graduates who want to work in a corporate setting but don’t want to leave the Midwest.

Everything from merchandising to marketing to distribution is handled at the corporate office, and over 15 ARMD alumni work there in various positions.

Sarah Volk started at Vanity as a Fit and Production Assistant after graduating in 2010. She is now the Product Manager for Sourcing and Product Development and also works on the trend team to interpret upcoming trends and colors. Sarah helps develop the product lines that Vanity’s buyers order from each season. She creates tech packs that include specifications for fabric and trims, target costs, number of units, delivery dates and quality standards. She then finds factories overseas who can meet those standards. After samples are made and orders are placed, Sarah oversees and approves the orders until they ship to Vanity’s 200 stores across the country.

Monica Miller is one of the buyers who chooses from the lines Sarah’s team creates. Monica is the Non-Denim Bottoms and Footwear Buyer at Vanity and has been with the company since 2008. Each season, she determines the sales plan and puts together the buy and assortment for each of her categories. To decide what to buy and in what quantities for each store, she has to consider the customer, the current trends and their sales goals and then constantly analyze how the products are selling. “When putting the buy together,” Monica says, “it is a strategic process ensuring I have the right product at the right time and with the right amount of units behind it.”

Sarah says working for a smaller company has allowed her to learn many aspects of product development and see products through from idea to production, but it also forces her to stay on her toes. “Planning trend for spring 2017 while I am reviewing selling on spring 2016, managing shipments for transition 2016, managing production for fall 2016 and placing orders for holiday 2016 are all happening at the same time, and I have several styles to manage for each season,” she says.

Monica and Sarah both agree that their college classes gave them a realistic idea of what fashion industry careers would require. Sarah says classes like Dress in World Cultures have helped her when traveling to work with factories in China, Vietnam and India. Working in the costume shop at NDSU’s Little Country Theater and taking apparel construction classes gave her knowledge of technical design that she uses to determine the best way for factories to construct Vanity’s garments, from the pattern marker to sewing the pieces together. “From when I was very young and first learning how to sew, the only thing I ever wanted to do was make clothes,” Sarah says. “My experience at NDSU helped me to find a path to making my dream job come true.”

15 FABOulous Years of Fashion

Since the Fashion, Apparel and Business Organization’s first fashion show in 2002, the theme has always set the tone. The 2002 show was centered on the fashion police in “The Cuffs Will Clash.” “Red Carpet Renegade” brought class to campus in 2006, “Passport to Fashion” took viewers around the world in 2008 and “Puttin’ on the Ritz” put a 1920s twist on 2010 style.

For this year’s 15th annual show, which was held on April 27, the main theme was “Be YOUnique: This is Your Time.” FABO also incorporated five underlying subthemes this year to make it special: Whimsical Garden Party,
Fargo Athletica, Downtown Playground, Business Professional and Glam. “We’re using the idea that you can take inspiration and put it all together to make something your own,” said fashion show co-coordinator Johnny Marquez.

The student design portion of the show allowed 11 students in fashion design classes to showcase their original creations. Taylor Markel, a student designer and the chair of FABO’s student designs committee, hoped the audience gained an understanding of the time, effort and passion that went into their designs. “From a spectator’s view at the fashion show,” she said, “they’ll think for maybe a minute or however long the garment is on the runway, ‘Wow that’s a pretty skirt’ or ‘That’s a great top.’ Little do they know how much actually goes into that. So it’s really just amazing to see and understand both sides of the coin.”

The show also featured looks from 21 retailers including Kittsona, Express, Proper and Prim, Fowler’s Heritage Company, Lot 2029, Evereve, Scheels, Buckle and Wedding Elegance. FABO members recruited 90 models to show their audience of over 500 people what inspiring fashions Fargo has to offer. They also made sure everything from public relations to music and set design to hair and makeup was in perfect coordination with their vision. In the end, the students’ hard work and long hours paid off, resulting in an amazing show that highlighted the diverse talents of our ARMD students.

Study Tour to the City of Angels
By Dr. Linda Manikowske

On May 20, 2016, nine Apparel, Retail Merchandising and Design students along with Professor Linda Manikowske flew off to spend a week in Los Angeles. Students had the opportunity to observe a wide range of operations and career opportunities related to the apparel and textile industry in the market center of Los Angeles. Dinner with alumna Bri Seeley provided the students with valuable career advice. Visits to the New Fashion Products factory and Blue River Denim wash house showed the students the work involved in creating premium denim. Students visited Nasty Gal headquarters and their Santa Monica store where they learned about merchandising in this successful retail company.

In downtown LA’s Fashion District, students visited Fashion Business, Inc., California Apparel News, and Design Options along with four showrooms in the market. They also shopped Santee Alley and fabric stores nearby. Students got an inside look at the design industry with a visit to the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising and from Hanna Hartnell, who showed them her collection of designer special occasion gowns. Shopping on Rodeo Drive, Melrose Avenue, Santa Monica and The Grove provided diverse aesthetic and cultural experiences as did a tour at The Getty Center, rounding out a great learning experience for everyone!
Florence Study Tour Highlights Italian Craftsmanship

By Dr. Ann Braaten

From March 11 to 18, 2016, nine students from Apparel, Design and Hospitality Management traveled with professor Ann Braaten to Florence, Italy, the cradle of the Renaissance and world fashion capital. We were awe-struck by the beauty of Florence’s architecture, the power and taste of the Medici family, and the hospitality of Florentines.

Italian craftsmanship was in evidence throughout our visits. We witnessed demonstrations by Gucci’s master craftsmen, the Scuola del Cuio (School of Leather) teachers, and silk weavers at Antico Steificia Fiorentino. We were also given an insider’s tour of La Rinascente, an Italian department store, by its junior visual merchandiser.

At Gucci we witnessed how excellence is put into products for the luxury market, starting with the highly-trained eyes and hands of the craftsmen who select and transform the materials into the product. Masters in handbag and shoe prototyping showed us Gucci’s product design, development and construction steps.

We spent time with Italian jewelry designer Angela Caputi at her showroom and design house. Caputi was an early adopter of synthetic resins to create jewelry designs in any color and size that are lighter in weight than most other materials. She encouraged students to have the courage to run their own businesses, saying that when you are the boss, you can follow your personal aesthetics and don’t have to bow to other’s tastes.

The trip to Florence provided a rich learning experience and understanding of what is meant by Italian Craftsmanship. Students gained historic and contemporary perspectives on Florence as a business, cultural and fashion center.