ENRICHMENT THROUGH CREATIVITY
THE 2011 RETAIL MERCHANDISING NEWSLETTER

by Alexandra Albers, Editor in Chief

The Retail Merchandising Student Leadership Board members and I are proud to build awareness about the growing Retail Merchandising program with this newsletter. Through descriptions of past course experiences, we have identified the diverse curriculum that the Retail Merchandising major has to offer. Although it is a business-related major, our courses also focus heavily on the concept of design by emphasizing the importance of creativity. Faculty members enrich classroom lessons by stimulating personal and professional development for all through encouraging creativity. As more students continue to graduate with business-related degrees, the creativity component of the Retail Merchandising major prepares students to enter the workforce as innovative thinkers. The proceeding articles will further highlight the different types of creativity offered in current Retail Merchandising courses.

Welcome to Network, a newsletter designed to bring you up to date with the Retail Merchandising program. It features articles from current students that highlight courses and programs that correspond to the retail industry and the College of Design. Please send your email address to chainfo@umn.edu for future issues.
As a retail merchandising major with aspirations to become a buyer, merchandiser, or a store manager it is important to understand fashion trends and be able to forecast them for future seasons. Fashion forecasters are essentially the fortune tellers of the retail world.

ADES 3217, Fashion: Trends and Communication, is an advance core elective taught by Dr. Juanjuan Wu. It covers fashion, trends, and forecasting. Dr. Wu created an interactive course that encourages students to apply course concepts in group projects as well as communicate effectively to audiences about fashion trends. There were five major projects, both individual and group, that allowed us to display our creativity. The projects took course concepts and applied them to what is currently going on in the fashion world as in campus fashion. When given the choice of which advance core electives to take, I highly recommend ADES 3217 because it made learning fun. If you want to play a role in the future of fashion, this course gives you the knowledge to be a retail fortune teller!

My favorite class project over the course of the semester was the Campus Photo Shoot. This group assignment let us creatively put together beautiful and unique magazine photo spreads. For this project we specifically analyzed what the current fashion trends are and how they are present on campus. It was a challenge to communicate these findings professionally as a visual medium. We used visually appealing elements, photos, and designs to create themed magazine spreads that articulated current campus fashion. This project, based on what we learned in this class regarding photography, styling, and modeling, allowed us to be creative and artistic. We were the models, stylists, make-up artists, and sometimes photographers. The theme my group forecasted for U of M students in Fall/Winter 2011 was Sparkle on the Roof. Our photos were shot on campus as a local rooftop apartment. The city
background accentuated our sequin theme in the styling. We identified sequins as a trend through research and campus observations of students adopting this style worn by celebrities.

For another group project we created a weekly fashion newspaper, U-Style. This publication discussed student fashion on the University of Minnesota campus through news, opinion, and feature articles. We also incorporated other unique components within the newspaper such as a weather section as well as a "Who Wore it Best" piece. My group and I conducted research and interviews with undergraduate students to identify campus fashion trends. Through research we created a unique and creative paper for students to read. One unique and inspiring topic of our newspaper was how students should dress for cold weather athletic events. The U-Style that we created was a winter edition and we chose to educate our readers on how to dress stylish yet effectively for the brutally cold Gopher Football games. These two projects were interactive and allowed us to work creatively. I enjoyed creating worthwhile projects that displayed my knowledge of current fashions. I also was able to learn through research more about fashion trends as well as the production of photo shoots.
by Alexandra Albers

I am a senior in the Retail Merchandising program. I am also working towards a minor in business management at the Carlson School of Management, along with a minor in French Studies. My experiences in the Retail Merchandising program have been exciting and enlightening as well as challenging. They’ve definitely prepared me for success in my future career endeavors.

Many people would agree that education is a very valuable asset in itself, but when paired with real world experiences, the opportunities available to students are endless. Like many courses required in the Retail Merchandising program, Visual Merchandising allows students to apply their creativity and design skills to real world situations. During this reoccurring spring course, students are paired up with the Uptown Association, a non-profit organization that supports Uptown’s community and businesses, to help promote a specific campaign.

This year’s class focused on the American Heart Association’s “Start!” campaign, which is designed to encourage Americans to live longer and healthier lives by engaging in regular physical activity. To promote healthy behavior and make the community aware of this movement, the Uptown Association decided to host a Shop and Walk, a day of shopping, dining and relaxing at nearly 40 Uptown businesses, all offering promotions for attendees. In the spirit of this event as well as to promote the campaign, the Uptown Association sought out the University of Minnesota Visual Merchandising students to create window displays for select businesses. There was a voting competition and two awards were given: the People’s Choice Award and the Celebrity Award, an award given to the window display that was the favorite among local, influential residents of the Twin Cities.

The Uptown Association sought out the University of Minnesota Visual Merchandising students to create window displays for select businesses during the American Heart Association’s Start! campaign.
To explain this project in more detail, I am sharing an example of a group that received an award for their outstanding work. Darius Anderson, Michael Dodes, Alison Pankow, and Kelsey Sultze teemed up to design the window display for the Uptown-based business, Old Chicago, and won the Celebrity Award. Their main goal when designing the window display was to not only promote the business and the cause, but also to tie the window display to the Uptown community and their trendy, urban lifestyle. They painted vibrant pictures of a pizza and a beer mug in order to promote Old Chicago’s most popular items and attract attention. This ultimately helped the group to achieve their goal of promoting the business, the campaign and Uptown as a whole.

Most importantly, receiving the opportunity to create window displays for current Uptown businesses allows students to utilize their creativity and design skills, while strengthening their business-related skills at the same time. Through this activity, students had a chance to apply information learned in the classroom, while gaining valuable skills outside of it. Visual Merchandising, along with many other courses in the Retail Merchandising program, do a wonderful job of setting students up for success and preparing them for their future in the workforce.

INNOVATIONS RISE

by Breanne Ament

I am a senior in the Retail Merchandising Program. In addition to the Student Advisory Board, I love being an active member in University organizations, including Fashion and Business (FAB) as the Events Assistant, and the University’s Link Up Program as a mentor.

Today more than ever, the importance of creativity is growing, especially in business. The companies that are succeeding in this tough economy are those that are innovative with their product and marketing. In the Retail Promotion class we learned that in order to create an effective and successful advertising campaign, it is imperative to be innovative. The course uses the acronym CAN to reinforce the three features that creative advertisements typically share. The C in CAN stands for connectedness. This means that the advertisement must be relevant to the target market of the brand and creates a bond with the target audience. As for the A, it represents the appropriateness of the advertisement. Although appropriateness seems similar to connectedness, appropriateness focuses on how the message relates to product verses connectedness, which focuses on how the ad relates to the target market. Appropriateness focuses on stressing the strengths and competitive advantages of the advertised brand compared to similar brands. Lastly, N is for novelty, or originality. This final part of the acronym CAN depicts the importance of an advertisement to create some sort of unexpectedness, something that will catch the attention of the consumer, something that simplifies a message in an eye-catching and memorable manner. Though Novelty may appear to be the most important element of the CAN model it is important to realize that by just focusing on novelty, a campaign will not be successful. It is necessary to integrate Connectedness, Appropriateness, and Novelty to create a successful campaign. Without the C and A, the advertisement will not be meaningful to the intended audience.

Retail Merchandising, unlike most programs at the University, focuses on innovation and creativity because they are vital elements to the industry. In the Retail promotions class we were able to practice creativity in every aspect, from our ideas to the way we produce projects. Following are exemplary examples of innovative projects produced by the fall 2010 Retail Promotions Class.

One way that creativity was depicted in the class was through the first group project. This project focused on...
exploring and analyzing a brand and its consumers. One group that excelled in utilizing creativity was the group that analyzed Coach. The members included: Tracy Dalluge, Michael Dodes, and Leslie Randall. This group recognized the importance of being creative when presenting their project. Their power point was impeccably designed and made their project one of the most engaging presentations because of its visual appeal.

The last project required us to apply our creativity. We were required to develop a new brand, analyze it, create a marketing strategy for it, and implement the strategy—including creating an advertisement. This project forced us to imaginatively create a brand and apply the CAN principles to construct the advertisement. Laura Gobel, Roxy Ryan, and Eden Lu created a brand extension, CL by Christian Lacroix and were extremely imaginative in producing their advertisement. Not only was the vision inventive but how they decided to execute it was creatively resourceful. Instead of using online pictures they decided to think outside the box and use their networks to find people who could help them execute their vision. They utilized their friends’ talents to help them professionally execute the CL promotion. To create the advertisement CL held a photo shoot using one friend to model the clothing and another friend for the photography and editing. This idea took a lot of time and imagination to execute. CL definitely exceeded my expectations.

As displayed through these projects, creativity is necessary to succeed, especially in business. Friedman explains in his speech to MIT, imagination is becoming one of, if not the greatest competitive advantage. As Retail merchandisers we need to explore and foster different uses of creativity. Individuals that exercise and expand imagination will be the people that get ahead in the industry. Innovation is all around us; it is what fuels the fashion industry. For many, the opportunity to use their creativity is what inspires them to enter retailing as a career. As a final point, I leave you with one more visionary notion from Friedman’s speech: the most important competition is not against others, it is between you and your imagination!
I am a junior at the University of Minnesota in the Retail Merchandising program. I love everything this campus has to offer. I am currently studying in Milan, Italy and am having one of the best experiences of my life because I get to study two of my passions – fashion and business.

Don’t be surprised if you see me doing a cartwheel in the middle of the street or building an instrument out of unique objects. DES 1111 Creative Problem Solving, taught by Dr. Brad Hokanson, is a course that will stimulate all aspects of the brain. It encourages students to develop and maintain creativity throughout daily activities. Brad Hokanson is a strong believer that creativity can be taught and developed through routine practice. Each person has the ability to improve creativity by paying close attention to simple activities that often become overlooked.

Students enrolled in Creative Problem Solving are challenged each week with a “do something different” (DSD) assignment. These assignments allow students to express their creativity in endless ways. For example, when I took Creative Problem Solving some of the DSD assignments included recreating a childhood activity, convincing another person to do something different, performing a specific activity in reverse, and talking to someone students had not previously met. By the end of the semester each student had completed numerous DSD assignments that often put each person out of their comfort zone, which in turn stimulated creativity.

In 2008, my Creative Problem Solving class was the subject of a University produced video that can be viewed at http://hokanson.design.umn.edu/movies/}

CreativeClassFPV-very-large.mov. The video recorded our class final, which was to fill McNeal Hall with different forms of creativity in groups. Each group used the aspect of creativity to their fullest and the results were outstanding. For example, a group transformed McNeal Hall into an animated aquarium and another filled it with holiday cheer.

This past fall, about 70 out of the 100 students in the class were retail majors. Since course enrollments are growing, Creative Problem Solving is being offered on both the St. Paul Campus and the East Bank campus. Making the course available to more students allows for diversity in terms of student majors and promotes the development of creativity to a greater portion of campus. Students are now tested at both the beginning and end of the semester to assess creativity development and progression. Generally results show that a student’s individual level of creativity increases as a result of the course. For the final examination, Hokanson asks his students to share how each has applied creativity in their regular life.

In my opinion, creativity is the key to success. Creative Problem Solving forces students to think outside of the box, a skill that can be applied to everyday actions for a lifetime. Creativity is not only a skill, but it is also a mindset. Students are given the ability to apply their improved creativity to future career practices. Welcome to the new generation focused largely on CREATIVITY!
A REAL WORLD OPPORTUNITY

During the spring 2012 semester, students in Juanjuan Wu's course on visual merchandising competed for the chance to have their window displays showcased by the Weisman Art Museum.

Olivia Ferraro, Molly Oberstar, Arthur Oxborough and Tera Peterson designed and implemented the winning project. Tera and Arthur are both current members of the retail merchandising student board.

"We are thrilled to provide a real world opportunity for students pursuing careers in retail merchandising," said Weisman shop manager Marissa Onhelber, who helped judge the designs. "It has been a joy to witness the student's creative process in coming up with designs inspired by the Weisman's collection and to see how they translate their ideas into a window installation."

STAYING CONNECTED

In October 2011, College of Design students, alumni and retail professionals came together for the annual Retail Connect event. The gathering, titled Going Mobile, Getting Social: Shopping with Today's Consumers, featured marketing professionals and executives from Best Buy and Kohls who shared examples of what their organizations have been doing online, including what's worked, what hasn't, and what's next.

The evenings kick-off presentation featured Jim Wehmann, senior vice president of global marketing at Digital River. He discussed how millions of people from around the world are overcoming historical barriers, through avenues such as social networks, mobile commerce, and App Stores to connect with their customers online. He highlighted how this shift will significantly impact direct marketing and customer relationships now and in the future.

Students also worked with Danica Andler, a visual merchandising specialist who formerly worked for Anthropologie, on ideation consultation. The winning display was implemented over spring break.

RETAIL MERCHANDISING STUDENTS CREATED WINDOW DISPLAYS FOR THE WEISMAN ART MUSEUM.

VARIOUS PHOTOS FROM PAST RETAIL CONNECT GATHERINGS. THE 3RD ANNUAL RETAIL CONNECT WILL BE HELD TUESDAY OCTOBER 30, 2012, 6:30 OPEN AND 7:00 PM PROGRAM.