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News

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Philadelphia University Establishes Fashion and Textiles Futures Center

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 15, 2015 – Philadelphia University announced today the establishment of its Fashion and Textiles Futures Center. The Futures Center, which will include a \$3 million investment in facilities, will advance the University’s innovative and highly regarded fashion and textiles curricula and enhance partnerships with industry leaders to more closely connect students to current and future jobs in an evolving marketplace.

The Philadelphia University Fashion and Textiles Futures Center will focus on the University’s unique integration of education, research and practice. It will provide state-of-the-art facilities to support student learning and foster collaboration, facilitate industry-sponsored projects, increase research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students and help attract and retain world-class faculty. Work on the physical space will begin in late spring and will be completed by the start of the fall 2016 semester.

“The Fashion and Textiles Futures Center will expand experience for our students, faculty and partners,” said Ron Kander, executive dean of the Kanbar College of Design, Engineering and Commerce. “PhilaU fashion programs are internationally ranked and our programs in textiles and textile engineering are regarded as among the best in the nation. The new Center will enable us to continue our leadership in providing the best possible 21st-century professional education for our students and helping to define the industry needs of the future.”

The plan includes enhanced collaborative design studios for students, fabrication laboratories, computer-aided design facilities and flexible active-learning classrooms. The educational programming will be further supported by the University’s advanced digital printing facilities, among the best in the world, and the Grundy Materials Evaluation Laboratory.

The Fashion and Textiles Futures Center will include a retail-like space designed to mirror the workings of modern fashion and textile design firms and reflect the industry environments that students will work in after graduation. This area will be used to showcase the

creative work of students and the University's industry partners and give fashion merchandising and management students the opportunity to hone marketing and merchandising skills by working on displays and presentations.

“Customers are always looking for new and innovative products and, as the apparel industry evolves, speed and flexibility are key factors that drive today's successes,” said Matt Mandracchia, vice president for design technologies and process for PVH Corp., one of the world's largest apparel firms that includes such brands as Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger. “Philadelphia University's Futures Center seeks to capitalize on these factors, providing a learning environment that promotes innovative thinking. Innovation supports speed and flexibility, helping students to learn and prepare for a fast-changing, product-centric career.”

The physical space will reflect and support the innovative curricula of these programs as part of the University's signature Nexus Learning approach: teaching and learning that is active, collaborative, tied to the real world and infused with the liberal arts. A critical component of Nexus Learning is the development of learning spaces that support interdisciplinary collaboration.

“The Fashion and Textiles Futures Center creates excellent educational opportunities for our students, modeling industry transdisciplinary trends as well as forward-looking projects,” said Marcia Weiss, the Harold Neuman Textile Design Chair and director of PhilaU textile design programs, who has been named director of the Center. “In the Futures Center, our students will benefit from world-class curricula, access to the latest technologies that support the creation of new knowledge and increased opportunities to work with industry partners on real-world projects.”

More than 700 PhilaU students—20 percent of the student body—major in eight academic programs related to the Futures Center, including bachelor's programs in fashion design, fashion merchandising and management, textile design and textile materials technology; master's programs in global fashion enterprise, textile design and textile engineering; and a doctoral program in textile engineering and science.

“The Fashion and Textiles Futures Center will reinforce Philadelphia University's prominence in the world of fashion and in textiles,” said Mike Leonard, academic dean of the Kanbar College School of Design and Engineering. “The Futures Center will further enable our students to collaborate in state-of-the-art open studios, which will enhance research on materials and techniques to advance the fashion and textiles industries,” Leonard said.

Philadelphia University, which was established in 1884 as the nation's first textiles school, has received many accolades for its fashion and textiles programs. These programs have been ranked among the best in the world by the [Business of Fashion](#) and Fashionista. The New York Immersion program, now in its second year, provides students with the opportunity to study in an international fashion capital and work on real-world projects with leading fashion and design firms. Fashion design students showcase their collections at the famed New York Fashion Week twice a year, while merchandising and management students help prepare for the runway.

Collaboration between students in their own and across disciplines is a critical component of a PhilaU education. That's why the U.S. space agency NASA chose to partner with PhilaU fashion and engineering students to develop a fashion-forward, technologically advanced spacesuit design. Each year, textile design students work with fashion design students to develop innovative, one-of-a-kind textiles for the fashion collections. Beyond apparel, students work on projects for home furnishings, automotive and other industries that utilize the latest in textile technologies. Three graduate students in textile engineering and textile design recently won first place in the 2015 Fabric Graphics Student Design Challenge for their project that incorporated the health benefits of antimicrobial textiles to artwork that could be used in healthcare settings.

"There is a culture of collaboration at PhilaU that sets us apart and gives our graduates an unparalleled advantage in industry," said Sheila Connelly, fashion design program director. "Our students get experience in the "bigger picture" of fashion. When designing senior collections, they work across disciplines to incorporate digital printing, surface imaging, laser-cutting, screenprinting, 3D printing, wearable technology and custom fabrics into their designs. The Futures Center will further facilitate these opportunities."

A fundraising campaign to support the Fashion and Textiles Futures Center has been initiated, and top industry executives from such firms as PVH, Waterworks and Weitzer are leading the effort. The campaign has been kicked off with a \$500,000 donation from PhilaU benefactor Maurice Kanbar '52 H'03.

In addition, a Leadership Committee representing diverse industry sectors and faculty members is being formed to guide and support the Fashion and Textiles Futures Center.

Philadelphia University, founded in 1884, is a private university with 3,700 students enrolled in more than 70 undergraduate and graduate programs. As the model for professional university education, the University, through its award-winning Nexus Learning approach, prepares students to be leaders in their professions in an active, collaborative and real-world learning environment infused with the liberal arts. Philadelphia University includes the innovative Kanbar College of Design, Engineering and Commerce; the College of Architecture and the Built Environment; and the College of Science, Health and the Liberal Arts. For more information, go to www.PhilaU.edu.