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# WKU students volunteer for NY Fashion Week

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Students from the first trip to New York Fashion Week pose together in F

SUBMITTED BY SETH HOWARD



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A few Western Kentucky University students will rub shoulders with international fashion designers in the hopes of jumpstarting their post-college career.

Eight fashion merchandising majors were selected to travel to the Big Apple this week to volunteer for New York Fashion Week, a premiere bi-annual showcase of upcoming products and trends.

Seth Howard, a WKU interior design and fashion merchandising instructor, said the students will fulfill numerous roles during “Men’s Day” on Friday.

“It’s one day during fashion week that’s dedicated to up-and-coming menswear brands,” Howard said. “I reached out to them to see if they needed volunteers and, of course, they do.”

The day consists of 10 brands showcasing their collections throughout the day, with both a morning and afternoon show.

It’ll be a long day of work for students, who arrive at the facility around 6:30 a.m. and work through both shows before ending around 6:30 p.m.

The trip is facilitated by Fashion Inc., WKU’s student-led fashion merchandising organization. Students pay for their own food and travel but purchase lodging together to lower the cost.

This will be the second time students made the trip to NYFW. The first, back in February, brought over a dozen students to help with sets, checking in guests, preparing models and more.

Howard, who spent 16 years working in the New York fashion scene, emphasized the greatest experience students receive is the chance to network with established professionals. For some, it could lead to the first step of their career.

“All of my connections are always happy to have us up, and it's great to see my friends – they love having access to potential interns or employees and associates once they graduate,” Howard said.

Fashion merchandising students Carra Chaney, a 20-year-old junior, and Luke Gagliano, a 21-year-old senior, will be making the trip to NYFW for the first time.

“I don't really know the full realm of what goes into the New York Men's Day, so I'm really just there to see what goes on – see all the working parts to it, who's working there and how it all comes together,” Gagliano said.

Chaney said it'll be her first trip to New York. She's excited to explore the city but said her focus was on

networking, which she said was essential in the industry.

“As soon as we get done with college, we have those connections with those people that we can go to and be like, ‘Hey, I just graduated, this is what I want to do, can you help me?’ ” Chaney said.

Chaney said while many take fashion for granted, she has always felt it was important both to individuals and to cultures.

“It's literally what we wear every single day,” Chaney said. “There's not a day that you are not going through fashion.”

Howard grew up on a tobacco farm in Monroe County and said opportunities like this simply didn't exist when he was trying to break into the industry.

After he came to WKU in 2021, his priority was leveraging his own connections to benefit students.

“Now, because I have a global network of friends and professionals that I've known for years, if I have a student that wants to go to Milan or Paris or London for internships and that sort of thing, I have people I can connect them with, and that's really been the best,” Howard said.

He added that a good network can only be maintained by a strong working reputation.

“I'm really making sure that they understand just having the connection isn't necessarily enough,” Howard said. “You really have to foster that and be reliable, have a good work ethic and be responsible for what you are ultimately trying to do.”

Howard said most students won't find their way to New York in their career – it's a hard place to live, and many students would prefer elsewhere. He said there are still opportunities for fashion careers even locally.

But regardless, the city is an epicenter for international fashion and the trip gives students a boost of confidence when they see themselves in that environment.

“If I can do that, any one of you can do that – I’m from the same place that you’re from,” Howard said. “I think just keep reiterating that if that’s what you want, it’s well within your reach, and just work hard and go for it.”

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