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## WKU students to get NY Fashion Week experience

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Jan 24, 2023



WKU fashion merchandising students work on sewing projects during c

Courtesy of Seth Howard

Fourteen Western Kentucky University fashion merchandising students will soon be able to do something most college graduates in their field can't – add a New

York Fashion Week experience to their resumes.

The students were selected as volunteers for the first day of New York Fashion Week, New York Men's Day.

Established in 2011, it's a day where 10 emerging men's fashion designers and brands are highlighted.

"Since about 2005, 2006, the menswear industry has really been outpacing women's wear in terms of growth, and there really wasn't a showcase or a platform that focused on menswear in the United States," said Seth Howard, WKU interior design and fashion merchandising instructor.

"This platform gives them an opportunity to get in front of all the leading fashion editors, stylists, influencers who will be in attendance at Fashion Week."

Similarly, the Fashion Week experience will give up-and-coming WKU fashion students exposure.

"Fashion is more of an active career rather than just sitting at a desk and learning," said Kathryn Belter, WKU junior and social media chair of the Fashion Inc. club. "It's all about going out and experiencing events like this."

Before coming to WKU two years ago, Howard lived and worked in New York City for 16 years in the fashion industry. One of his connections led to the volunteer opportunity for his students.

Last December, Howard took his class to New York City to meet with different organizations and learn about what they do and what career opportunities are out there. One of the organizations was Agency PR, a fashion marketing communications agency owned by Erin Hawker, Howard’s friend and founder of New York Men’s Day.

Howard reached out to see if Hawker needed any more volunteers, and she was willing to bring some of his students on board.

The students will be doing anything that’s needed, from checking in guests to helping with the models backstage to being assigned to a specific designer and taking care of everything they need, Howard said.

“It’s also going to be a lot of quick thinking on their feet because as things pop up, the agency that organizes everything and who allowed us to come in to volunteer may need something that wasn’t anticipated,” he said.



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It will be a long, 12-hour day – the students are working the morning and afternoon shift – but it will be worth it, Belter said.

Alia Duncan, a WKU junior who is also going to Fashion Week, said that she wants to meet as many people as she can to network.

“Everyone knows everyone, especially in this industry, and I think if you can get your foot in the door in any way, then it’s the best thing you can do,” Duncan said. “You never know who they can be one day.”

Even though it’s a quick trip, Howard said the people they meet in 24 hours could help them with potential job placements and internships down the road.

The trip is particularly exciting for Duncan, whose dream is to move to New York City and open her own store and clothing line. She wants her line to benefit people of all body types.

“I just want to be able to influence the fashion industry in a more accepting way,” she said. “I feel like we’re already on the right track to that, but I feel like coming from experience, being able to have that kind of career would be super important to me.”

Belter isn’t sure if a New York move is in her future, but recognizes the importance of the city in the fashion world. She wants to go into the business side of fashion and create something that helps reduce clothing pollution.

“I don’t really know what company I want to work for, but definitely something that I love and I can relate to, like not just Target or Walmart – something that inspires me,” she said.

Belter and Duncan are intrigued by the prospect of working with a men’s fashion show.

“I feel like men’s fashion is like a whole different world compared to women’s fashion for sure,” Duncan said.

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