LOS ANGELES TRADE-TECHNICAL COLLEGE
FASHION DESIGN PROGRAM - AN 80+ YEAR TRACK RECORD OF EXCELLENCE AND SUCCESS

The Fashion Design program at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College (LATTC) has an 80+ year history as the first program (power sewing) at the college. The program is recognized throughout the Los Angeles apparel industry and across the state as a preeminent workforce development program. In the past fourteen years, the fashion design program at LATTC has awarded the most community college fashion design degrees and certificates in the state of California (note: data is only available back 14 years). In fact, in 2005-06 this program was the #1 community college in California in conferring Fashion Design AA/AS degrees, #1 in conferring Fashion Design Certificates of Completion, and #1 in conferring Fashion Design Skills Certificates—a triple crown achievement.

In its 80+ year history, tens of thousands of individuals have been expertly trained for the fashion industry. In the last five years alone, 480 Fashion Design students have completed an AA/AS degree or Certificate of Completion—an average of 100 per year. And there are over 2,500 enrollments annually in the program’s courses.

Most importantly, this program is providing a skilled labor force necessary to meet the high growth/high demand fashion design industry sector and job clusters—which are projected to experience double-digit growth in both the state of California (30.4% increase) and in Los Angeles (20.8% increase) to 2012. Los Angeles is the leading center for apparel manufacturing in the United States. The apparel manufacturing firms in the area require personnel trained in the design and technical aspects of clothing production. Many local apparel manufacturing firms employ the program’s graduates as designers, assistant designers, grader/marker makers, pattern makers, technical designers, specification writers, and production managers.

In addition through the fashion design cooperative work experience program, nearly 10% of existing fashion design students, while attending LATTC, are placed in paid and monitored internships at apparel manufacturers such as Koral Industries, Cosa Nostra, Jonathan Martin’s Hype division, Unique and Andrew Christian, Crispin and Basilio, and BCBG to name a few. Ten to fifteen percent of these interns are retained as full-time employees at the conclusion of their internship.

It is important to point out that not only does the program serve as the workforce development engine of the Los Angeles fashion industry, graduates and students of the program are considered the best in the industry. This is most evident by the college’s success at the annual Fashion Symposium held March 17, 2007. LATTC students took home 11 of the 15 (73%) awards in the fashion design contest categories including 2-Best in Show, 2-First Place, 3-Second Place, 5-Third Place, and 4-Honorable Mention finishes. Another example of student success is Jeffrey Sebelia, the winner of Project
Runway on the Bravo channel—a nationally televised competition. Jeffrey is a former student of the fashion design program. In a recent article in the Los Angeles Times Magazine, Jeffrey stated that when he enrolled in a sewing class at LATTC "It just dawned on me that I loved fashion." "The minute I started draping fabric on a form, I loved it." Jeffery has recently been featured in Elle Magazine where he indicates he enrolled at LATTC to "learn how to sew the right way, so that I could sell to stores". Jeffrey has not forgotten his roots at LATTC and thus provides paid internship experiences for LATTC students at his business, Cosa Nostra.

Industry leaders recognize the importance of the program for the Los Angeles fashion industry and the quality and skill of the program’s graduates.

The Fashion Design program is formulated to provide specialized training in the latest methods of garment construction, illustration, draping, and pattern making, including the most widely used apparel software programs. Students are encouraged to continually experiment with creative design problems during the two-year program. The fashion department is staffed by professional instructors who have spent many years in the fashion industry as designers, pattern makers, production managers and manufacturers in all categories of apparel, and the author of the most widely used pattern making textbook is also on staff. The fashion community contributes to the program through scholarships donated by professional groups, companies and individuals to qualifying students. Fashion professionals are invited to work with and critique student designs and prominent speakers visit the campus on a regular basis to lecture on current fashion industry trends. Foreign and domestic fashion publications are available for student reference as well as an extensive collection of historical fashion magazines. The program also has a vast collection of apparel from noted designers and historical costumes used to inspire students and to offer creative solutions to design problems.

Fashion Design classrooms are equipped like design rooms complete with industrial sewing machines, pressing equipment, grading machines and dress forms. In addition, the college has state-of-the-art computer laboratory classrooms where instruction is offered in Gerber Technology,
Lectra Inc, and Tukatech which allow students to master technology along with traditional skills. The newest computer laboratory was developed to answer industry demand for training in fashion and technical illustration using Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. The Fashion Design program prepares students for employment in all areas of apparel manufacturing from assistant designers to employment in production management. Upon successful completion of the program students are proficient in construction and assembly, patternmaking and grading, technical and fashion illustration, and draping techniques used to manufacture soft goods. In addition students understand and are able to apply computer technology to industry-related tasks. The comprehensive two-year program stresses industrial problem solving using professional techniques.

Lastly, twice a year the program puts on the Gold Thimble fashion show to showcase the works and talent of students. Many community members have expressed that this event is a highlight of the year. People come from far and wide to see it. In fact, California Apparel News featured the winning design from the most recent Gold Thimble fashion show on the cover of their December issue. In addition an article and pictures of student designs were included in the same issue.