

Fashion students at Humber enable change in the industry through on-campus initiatives

This article is about a five-minute read.

“We’re fortunate to have a diploma, degree and post-graduate certificate in business and fashion [at Humber] that offer hands-on work, integrated learning opportunities,” explains Jennifer Reitano (she/her), professor and program coordinator of [Humber’s Fashion Arts and Business program](#).

Humber’s three fashion programs focus on the business side of fashion, with some creative courses as well. Sustainability is addressed in all three programs, including an entire course dedicated to ethics and sustainability.

The [Fashion Management post-graduate](#) program, specifically, “Was designed in response to observed trends in the market and society, and in response to the strategic shift of Humber with the view of preparing career-ready citizens. The movement towards such profile has proved to be a visionary one, as reinforced by the current pandemic,” says Rossie Kadiyska, professor and program coordinator of the Fashion Management post-graduate program. “Students enrolled [in our program have the opportunity to explore] supply chain, finance, fashion ethics, and the latest innovations in sustainable fashion trends. Career prospects include social media, consultancy, supply chain and operations, e-commerce and entrepreneurship.”

“By educating our students on the topic of sustainability, we hope that the new generation will think critically about fast fashion,” explains Jennifer. “By 2030, it’s expected that there will be 148 million tons of textile waste. The average lifetime of a clothing item is three years or less, as only 15 per cent of consumers think to recycle [or repurpose] their clothing.”

“Sixty per cent of millennials say they want to shop more sustainably, and we definitely see this in our students,” Jennifer notes.

“Working in the third most polluting industry in the world, we want to change perspectives of fashion [for the community],” says Jennifer.



Above: Jennifer Reitano (she/her). Photo: Carlos Charris/ [Carlos Does Photo](#).

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Eco Closet

In the past, fashion students have partnered with the Office of Sustainability to host [Eco Closet](#). Students, staff, faculty and community members were invited to donate gently used professional business attire. Students heading out to placements/ internships or entering the job market were able to purchase professional clothing at a discounted price. In the end, all revenue went to [Youth Without Shelter](#).



Above: Fashion student at Eco Closet

Digital Fashion Week: Powerhouse

Traditionally, fashion students host an in-person fashion show; however, due to the global pandemic, students transitioned to the online environment and created a Digital Fashion Week. “With hard work, they were able to accommodate the event to the [virtual setting] and bring everyone together to celebrate what they love most – fashion,” explains Jennifer.

This past year, fashion students put together a Digital Fashion Show, highlighting vintage attire.

INFUSE Humber

Students of the fashion program took their passion for sustainability and developed [INFUSE Humber](#). This student-led magazine was traditionally a print edition but has since moved online.

“The 2020-2021 team at INFUSE Humber was the first to have operated solely online. We started in the Summer where I had the task of virtually building a team to create an e-magazine issue focusing on fashion, beauty, inclusivity and of course, sustainability,” says Janae Wilson, editor in chief.

Janae continues, “My experience with working with 23 dedicated, talented and diverse fashion students has been absolutely incredible. These students have so much information on the world of fashion to offer including how to incorporate more sustainable practices in our industry. This team continues to amaze me – I wouldn’t have it any other way.”



Above: Students of the Fashion program

Saxion International Business Week

In 2018, Jennifer attended Saxion International Business Week at [Saxion University](#) in the Netherlands with Rossie. The two presented to various business students on the universal topic of sustainability, “It was a unique opportunity because there were [students] from all different areas of business. It was very humbling to see that [sustainability] is a topic that all students can relate to and that [students] see the need for change,” says Jennifer.



Above: Students of the Fashion program

Sustainability Fashion Committee

Established in 2019, Humber’s Sustainability Fashion Committee, partnered with the Office of the Principal and the Office of Sustainability to host a one-day event, Slow Fashion. “[The event] included a pop-up shop, a sewing repair hub with representatives from Regent Park and a variety of distinguished speakers,” explains Francesca D’Angelo, professor and program coordinator of the Fashion Management degree program.

“My experience studying sustainability in the fashion stream at Humber has been extremely rewarding,” says Kevin Watts, student of the Fashion Management post-graduate program. “Learning to navigate how to live your life in a more sustainable manner can be overwhelming but I found the best way to start the process is to simply pick one thing you are passionate about and try your best to be better. For me, this was fashion.”

“My experience in the sustainability stream has been nothing short of exciting and informative for me,” shares Jasreen Pannu, student of the Fashion Management post-graduate program. “I’ve had such a great experience learning about the ins and outs of the fashion industry. The industry leaders teaching us about sustainability are really getting the students to think outside of the box and how we can drive innovation forward when it comes to protecting our environment.”

“I’ve received emails from students explaining that they chose Humber because the program offered a course dedicated to sustainability,” concludes Jennifer. “It is so rewarding as a professor to see students that share the motivation and drive to create change.”