



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SHOWCASE

Fashion Merchandising & Management

Empowering Future Fashion Entrepreneurs: Cultivating Innovation, Strategy, and Community Impact

Professor Esther Amato, MBA, and Professor Dong Shen PhD

Article Consignment, Crossroads Trading, Fashion in the City, Identity Boutique, LiBush International, Retrospect Vintage Fashion, Sparkle Bridal Couture, SWAGGER, Topstitch Production, Threadeco



Program Description

Fashion Entrepreneurship (FASH 146) is a service-learning course designed to prepare students for launching their own **fashion-related startups**. In this course, students develop a comprehensive business plan and engage in 45 hours of **experiential learning** with community fashion partners. This **hands-on experience** allows them to apply **business concepts** in **real-world environments**, covering areas such as **marketing, merchandising, inventory management, and social media branding**. The course concludes with a **professional business pitch** to industry professionals, **showcasing the students' innovation, strategy,** and collaborative efforts.

Promoting Student Success in College and Career

In the Fashion Entrepreneurship course, students bridged theory and practice by applying concepts such as **branding, marketing strategy, merchandising, and business planning** to real-world challenges in partnership with local fashion businesses. Through **45 hours of fieldwork**, students gained hands-on experience in areas like **social media management, product styling, and market research**—building confidence, strengthening communication, and learning to work collaboratively in professional settings.

This immersive experience helped students connect academic learning to real industry demands while developing essential **career-ready skills** such as **teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving,** and an **entrepreneurial mindset**.

As a result, students left the course better prepared to manage projects, contribute meaningfully to teams, and step confidently into the fashion and retail workforce.

Community Impact

Community partners benefited not only from the extra hands and fresh perspectives but also from the opportunity to mentor emerging professionals—some of whom became future employees.

"Angelina did a fantastic job—so much so that we're hiring her! She was professional, eager to learn, and always ready to help wherever needed." — Threadeco

This ongoing partnership model strengthens Sacramento's creative economy while creating pathways for continued collaboration between the university and the local business community.

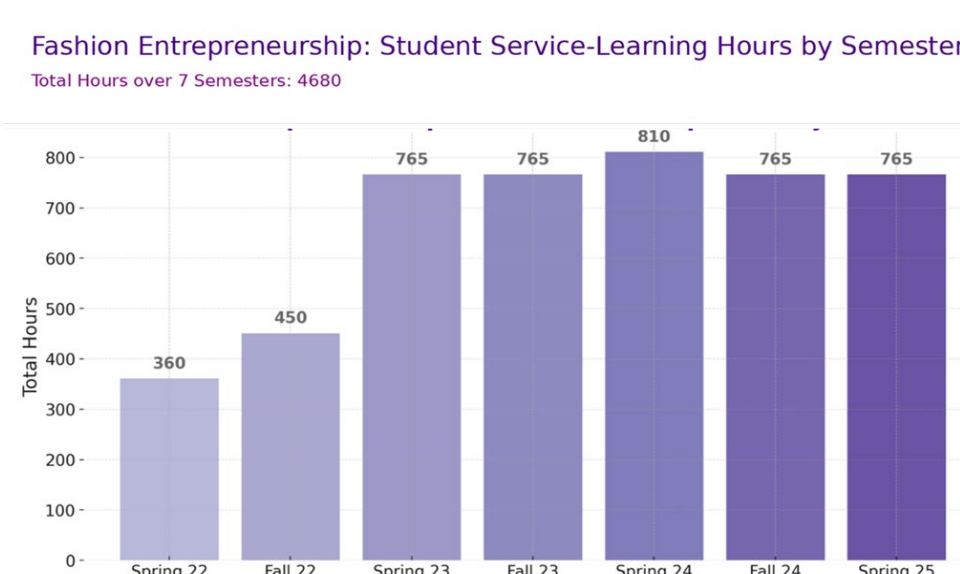


Experiential Learning Program Highlight(s)

Over **seven semesters**, **104 students** participated in the Fashion Entrepreneurship course, completing **45 hours** of fieldwork each and contributing over **4,680 hours** of service to **local fashion and retail businesses**.

Key Accomplishments:

- Partnered with **10 community-based fashion businesses**, supporting merchandising, marketing, inventory, and events.
- Developed and presented **comprehensive fashion business plans and pitch presentations**.
- Several students were **hired or offered internships** by their community partners as a direct result of their work.

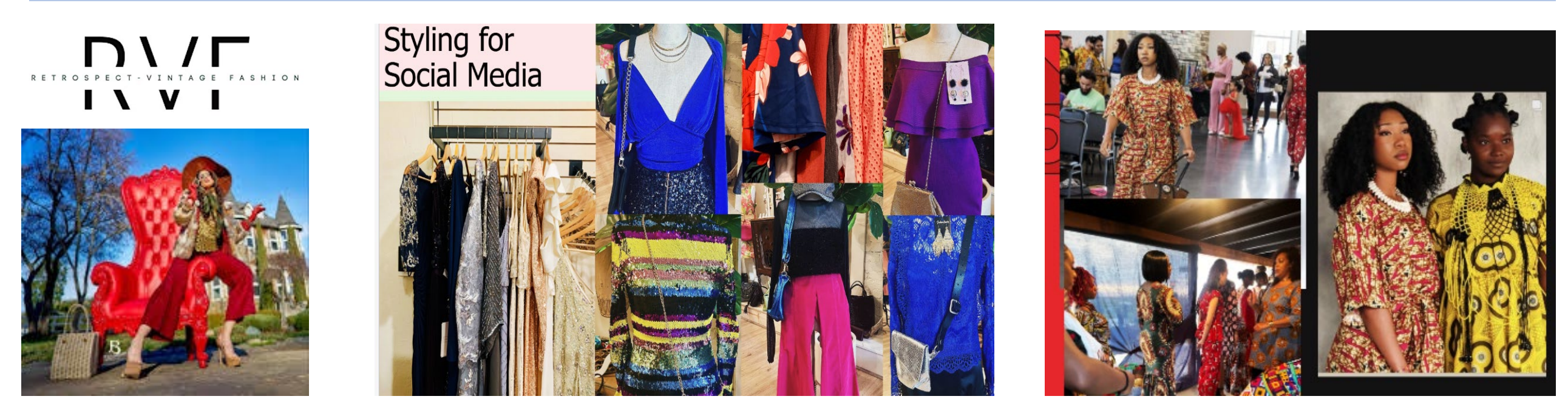


Product Researcher & Stylist at Threadeco Results / Deliverables Allegra Polendo

During my time at Threadeco I completed 3 informative PowerPoints that could be used to help grow Threadeco's subscription clothing box service and style profile. Utilizing my styling experience, I also helped clients and customers find the right outfits for special occasions or just a casual day out. I was also featured in an article posted on the Sacramento State website where I talked about my love for repurposed clothing and my enjoyment working at Threadeco. This experience has not only helped me grow my confidence in running my own business one day, but it gave me the tools to start the process. I now know the best shipping platforms to fulfill large orders, where to buy eco friendly packaging, and regained my love for styling clients. I'm no longer afraid to start my dream.



As part of Fashion Merchandising and Management lecturer Esther Amato's fashion entrepreneurship class, Sacramento State senior Allegra Polendo, right, works at Threadeco in the Old Sacramento Waterfront business district with owner Maggie Baker, left. (Sacramento State/Bibiana Ortiz)



Campus Community Impact

Fashion Entrepreneurship fosters **real-world collaboration, career readiness, and student confidence** through hands-on partnerships with local fashion businesses.

Students applied classroom concepts while gaining experience in **styling, merchandising, and sustainable fashion** with partners like **Threadeco, Weave, Retrospect Vintage Fashion, Crossroads & LiBush**. Faculty supported students in connecting fieldwork to career goals, creating a dynamic and empowering learning environment.

"At Crossroads Trading, I've learned the ins and outs of the buy-sell-trade retail model. A highlight was working on visual merchandising, where I modeled seasonal outfits and styled front-window mannequins. I've enjoyed helping on the sales floor, processing clothing, and restocking racks. I also gained insight into the store's buying process and hope to one day assist with selecting inventory. This has been a fun and valuable experience, and I'm excited to continue my connection with Crossroads." — Nolan Ashworth

