



Strategies for Success Advising Guide: *Fashion Merchandising Major*



The **Fashion Merchandising Associate in Science degree** is intended for students who want to pursue careers in the world of fashion. The degree provides students with a strong business education and provides an opportunity to receive college credit for on the job experiences in fashion retail, buying and merchandising.

This advising guide includes information that will help you to explore your academic and career interests and determine whether the **Fashion Merchandising Major** will support your long-term goals.

Exploring Your Options

Before deciding upon a major, you should take some time to explore your interests and develop your long-term academic, career, and personal goals. Periodically throughout each semester, meet with your advisor so that he/she can guide you through a self-exploration process. A list of activities has been provided below to help you identify your academic and career interests. These activities are for your first year or during your first 30 credits at MCC.

- During the first few weeks of your first semester at Middlesex, schedule an appointment to meet with your advisor and discuss your future plans and how the **Fashion Merchandising** degree can help you to achieve your goals. You and your advisor will work together to build an academic plan in DegreeWorks (an online educational planning tool that can be accessed through MiddleNet: <https://middenet.middlesex.mass.edu>) that will include:
 - Your major and degree requirements
 - A map of the courses you will take each semester
 - Your academic, career and personal goals, as well as, plans to achieve them
- Complete the FOCUS2 online career assessment tool which is located on our website at www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices/focus2.asp. After completing Focus2, schedule a meeting to discuss your results with a Career Counselor. Call 1-800-818-3434 or visit the Academic, Career and Transfer Centers in Lowell and Bedford to schedule your career counseling appointment.
- Review the career biographies which are located on the Career Services website at www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices/bios.asp
- Mid-Semester; schedule an appointment with your advisor to review your academic progress. Also, use this time to discuss your progress toward meeting your academic and career goals.
- Before the semester ends, schedule an appointment to meet with your advisor to discuss the classes you will take the following semester. (Early November to plan for spring classes, early April to plan fall and summer classes.)

Is the Fashion Merchandising Major a Right Fit for Me?

Think about whether you have the following personality traits and abilities that people in the fashion and retail industry must possess:

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■ Ability to work with people and under stressful situations

Fashion and retail positions involve working with a variety of people. Most retail positions involve working with the customer and with staff. Many fashion related positions also work with a wide variety of clients and possibly the end consumer. Very often there are deadlines in the fashion industry and high demand seasons in the retail field. Both require that you remain calm and professional in stressful or demanding situations.

■ Ability to understand the marketplace needs

Retail buyers, managers and sales associates need a keen sense of current style that is appropriate for their target markets. Fashion coordinators, visual merchandisers and other support industries also need to understand their target market and what appeals to them.

■ Ability to multi-task

During an average day people in retail are selling, ordering, training, planning, and working to achieve daily, weekly and monthly sales goals. You need to be flexible, organized and thorough. Other fashion positions also involve working on several projects at the same time. Keeping track of the stages of each project require that you be organized and detail orientated.

■ Ability to work as part of a team

The staff at a store function more efficiently and effectively when they act as a team. Many retail organizations stress a team concept of management.

■ Ability to communicate

Verbal communication is extremely important in the fashion field. People who speak well and present themselves in a professional, confident manner do well in this field.

Fashion Merchandising Program Outcomes

Graduates of the program are prepared to:

- Use industry-specific knowledge relevant to the operation of fashion merchandising organizations and demonstrate the ability to apply business principles to this industry;
- Use critical thinking skills to appraise and evaluate the business practices of various major fashion merchandising chains;
- Describe how various cultural differences must be considered in the practice of fashion marketing and operations, both locally and globally;
- Communicate effectively using written, oral and nonverbal techniques, including the use of technology in the gathering and presentation of information;
- Demonstrate a grasp of the complexities of ethical issues in business, and in particular the field of fashion merchandising;
- Comprehend the rapid change taking place in the business environment and demonstrate an ability to engage in ongoing professional development.

AND

- Use knowledge acquired at MCC as a foundation for continued study and/or practical application;
- Interpret and analyze information in order to engage in critical thinking and problem solving;
- Communicate, use information, and employ technology effectively;
- Communicate an understanding of the world from a global perspective;
- Demonstrate social responsibility within the college community;
- Demonstrate the capacity for on-going personal and professional development

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Advising Notes

■ Internships in the fashion and retail industry:

Each student in the Fashion Merchandising program does a semester internship while taking other courses. Most of the students interested in retailing find local companies. Some students have also done internships in the Fashion Coordination offices at TJX Corporation, Saks Fifth Ave. and Neiman Marcus in Boston.

The Career Path

Graduates of the Fashion Merchandising major are prepared for entry-level careers as assistants or trainees in a variety of departments in retail, wholesale, sales or manufacturing organizations. Some students' career pursuits may include department sales and management, buying, marketing, merchandising and styling. Although not primarily intended as a transfer degree, some students do continue on to a bachelor's degree program.

Career-planning Activities:

- ___ Work with your advisor to create a Career Plan. As a student who is on the Career Path, your focus should be on building your skill-set and marketing yourself for a job.
- ___ Work with an MCC career counselor who can help you create a resume and cover letter. Find an internship to enhance your skills and establish some work experience. Call 1-800-818-3434 or visit the Academic, Career and Transfer Centers in Lowell and Bedford to schedule your career counseling appointment.
- ___ Continue to work with an MCC career counselor who can help you with interview skills and job search techniques. Schedule an appointment with your advisor to follow up on your career plan.

Fashion Merchandising Career Paths and Duties:

SALES ASSOCIATE PATH:

Many students start their careers working as a sales associate in a retail firm that appeals to them.

General retail work tasks include:

- Selling merchandise to customers
- Handling returns and other customer transactions
- Maintaining a visually exciting space
- Meeting daily, weekly, monthly sales goals
- Attending training sessions for employee procedures as well as updates for new merchandise trends

Promotion to a Keyholder and/or Assistant Manager:

In addition to the above tasks, this position includes opening and closing the store

- Planning sales associates schedules
- Meeting with Managers and District Managers to review store goals

Promotion to Manager:

Involves all of the above tasks as well as holding responsibility for the profitability of the store.

District Manager:

This position involves overseeing several stores in a region. The next step would be Regional Manager, which would include oversees stores in several states.

BUYING CAREER PATH:

Many students start their careers working as a sales associate in a retail firm that appeals to them.

Sales Associate:

This position gives the student a thorough understanding of the retail operation.

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Manager in the Retail Store then Beginning Position at Corporate Headquarters:

Some companies promote from within and train managers to become assistant buyers.

Assistant Buyer/Associate Buyer:

- Coordinates and researches information for buyers
- Oversees paperwork for ordering and reordering merchandise
- Assists buyer in reviewing each seasons results
- In contact with store managers to discuss merchandising efforts for upcoming seasons

Assistant Buyer/Associate Buyer:

Assumes total responsibility for ordering merchandise. Large organizations have buyers who specialize in a specific line of merchandise. This involves covering marketing events to learn about new lines. Working with top management to determine budgets. Ordering merchandise and planning merchandise distribution to each store in the company. Evaluating financial results during and after the season.

OTHER FASHION CAREER PATHS:

Graduates from the Fashion Merchandising Program at Middlesex have also gone on to work in Visual Merchandising, Fashion Styling, Human Resources in Retailing, and Manufacturers' Sales Representative.

The Transfer Path

Most large organizations require a Bachelors degree for the buying positions. Many students who want that career path transfer to local colleges such as Framingham State University in Framingham, MA and Lasell College in Newton, MA. Some students have also transferred to FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) in Manhattan, NY.

- Work with your advisor to create a Transfer Plan. Identifying and applying to a Bachelor's Degree program will be your focus. You'll need to research academic programs of interests, colleges that offer these programs and be aware of deadlines for admissions, financial aid, and housing deposits (if you are interested on living on campus). The transfer process can be complex. Your advisor and transfer counselor can help you with this process.
- Schedule an appointment to meet with an advisor to learn about the transfer programs that are available to you as an MCC student, such as *MassTransfer*, transfer/articulation agreements with other private colleges and programs. Also, ask about the Common Application and the benefits of using this form. Call 1-800-818-3434 or visit the Academic, Career, and Transfer Centers in Lowell or Bedford to schedule your transfer counseling appointment.
- If the transfer institution that you are applying, to requires that you write a personal statement, make an appointment with a tutor in the writing center to help you edit and review your essay. Remember the personal statement reflects who you are as a student and is also a sample of your writing ability.
- Look for transfer scholarships that may be available. Consider applying to the MCC Foundation Scholarships. The deadlines for these MCC scholarships are typically at the end of the fall semester.
- If possible, plan to go on college visits. Every college looks good online or in a glossy photo, but you can get a better feel for the school when you visit. Your transfer counselor can help you prepare to get the most from this visit.

MCC Advising Resources:

- Career Services: www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices
- Transfer Services: www.middlesex.mass.edu/transfer
- MassTransfer: www.mass.edu/masstransfer
- Financial Aid: [/www.middlesex.mass.edu/financialaid](http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/financialaid)
- Foundation Scholarships: www.middlesex.mass.edu/foundation/scholarships
- College Board Match Maker: http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/search/adv_typeofschool.jsp