

EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDERGRADUATE FASHION
MERCHANTISING PROGRAMS RELATIVE TO
PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION

A DISSERTATION
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I. INTRODUCTION

Origin and Importance of the Study

The growth in the number of retail establishments and retailing opportunities has increased tremendously since 1967. To accompany this growth, there has been an increase in the number of young people interested in merchandising careers (52). As a result, educators have been searching for answers to a number of questions pertaining to curricula, educational preparation, and specialized expertise needed to meet the demands of the business community.

There is a demand today for competent employees at every level in the fashion industry (18). Students interested in merchandising careers are demanding and searching for relevant programs due to the demands of the job market. Home economics and business programs, with various areas of specialization, can provide the required competencies by implementing new programs and updating existing ones.

A 1972 survey of four-year home economics programs (27) provided data on current programs, issues, and trends in home economics. Results showed that current home

economics curricula are primarily traditional, tightly prescribed, and are not taking advantage of opportunities in field experience and interdisciplinary offerings.

Carpenter (7) reported that specialized fashion education was desirable for entry level positions in the fashion industry. Results of Carpenter's study indicated that the participants with the highest educational level worked in the most prestigious stores.

If graduates are to find new and challenging positions in business, educators must revise programs to accommodate students' desires for a broader range of business opportunities (33). Findings of a clothing and retailing survey by Hively (24) showed that the curriculum, as evaluated by graduates, contributed to job success. Also, recommendations were made to introduce a problem solving course and to strengthen the business course requirements.

Results of a study conducted by Bornman (5) on the revision of fashion merchandising curricula revealed that both manufacturers and retail store managers were more receptive to applicants who were clothing and textile graduates rather than clothing and textile non-graduates, and graduates with work experience rather than those without work experience. Retail store managers preferred curricula that incorporated marketing and business courses.

Cole (8) investigated the merits of a fashion merchandising program. Results showed all groups in the study rated basic textiles, basic clothing construction, merchandising, and business as very important courses.

Challenges exist with respect to student needs, trends, and developments in the fashion industry. To meet these challenges effectively, curricula and instruction must be closely coordinated with business and industry. As a result, there should be an increase in the competency of clothing and merchandising graduates. Grace (18) stated that a good career in fashion merchandising, just as any worthwhile career, requires a good education, good experience, and some opportunity for success.

There is an existing need to gain information about activities which are currently performed by employees and their educational preparation for employment. A knowledge of the needs of the retail industry and training provided by colleges and universities is necessary. If students are to be employed in the retail industry, there must be restructuring of fashion merchandising curricula through cooperative efforts between colleges and the business industry.

Relatively few studies have been undertaken to

determine the adequacy of existing fashion merchandising programs at the college level. Previous studies have been limited to colleges and universities within a specific locality. Additional research, that is broader in scope, is necessary. Information from such a study could be useful in revising existing programs and implementing new ones. Data obtained might be utilized by both administrators and supervisors in preparing students for jobs in merchandising. Feedback from both students and members of the retail industry may be useful in evaluating program effectiveness and possible shifts in the curriculum.

General Statement of the Problem

This study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of four-year college fashion merchandising curricula in the preparation of students for careers in fashion merchandising. The differences between employee preparation and training desired by retailers and those recommended by graduates were examined. Fashion merchandising programs from colleges and universities also were examined.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature pertinent to fashion merchandising curricula and educational preparation and training was conducted. This review was divided into four areas as follows: 1) curriculum planning and evaluation, 2) educational requirements, 3) qualifications and training, and 4) internship programs.

Curriculum Planning and Evaluation

A curriculum may refer to a systematic arrangement of courses or the total educational experiences that are provided for students to learn. The term "curriculum" is also used to describe a course of study leading to a degree in a specific field of study (35).

The theory of curriculum development described by Taba (44) is that all curricula are composed of certain elements regardless of their particular design. A curriculum usually contains a statement of aims and specific objectives, indicates some selection and organization of content, and includes a program of evaluation of the outcomes.

The planning function is one of the most important components in the design and development of change and

improvement in an educational program (32). A study of needs assessment in higher education was conducted by Morgan and Feldman (34). The authors stated that planning best starts with the identification of needs. A needs assessment provides information necessary for making decisions in regard to planning programs that conform to the mission of the institution, needs of students, and needs of the community. Needs assessment can: 1) determine a process of identifying and documenting objectives, 2) provide a realistic basis for selecting programs, and 3) provide criteria for evaluation of educational programs.

In discussing the student-centered curriculum, Tuckman (50) stated that a curriculum must be defined in terms of its goals as they apply to students, society, and occupational requirements. Tuckman's concept is that the purpose of a curriculum is to provide students with experiences that will lead them to certain desired goals.

Tyler (51), in an address presented at a meeting of the American Home Economics Association in 1962, stated that in developing a curriculum current changes need to be examined; particularly those that have direct implications regarding needs and opportunities in the labor market. Education must emphasize flexibility,

adaptibility, and continued learning in order to keep up with accelerating developments in science and technology. Also, emphasis should be focused upon helping students broaden their experiences and to be capable of acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Presently, the majority of fashion merchandising programs are included as a major area of specialization in the total home economics program. One goal is to offer both academic education and retail work experience in order to prepare students for careers in fashion merchandising.

In discussing issues confronting home economics in colleges and universities, Henderson (23) stated that employers are demanding specialization from the specific areas in home economics. The home economics field must be willing to set up programs that lead to specialization if a graduate is to become competent in his or her profession.

According to Spafford (39), each college department of home economics is challenged to develop the best possible educational program for its particular situation. Simpson (38) suggested that challenges in curriculum development are at all levels. These challenges can be viewed in terms of six major bases for curriculum decisions:

1. Conditions of society and related needs
2. Needs of students
3. Content and organization of the subject area
4. Developments in the educational field
5. Needs related to the local situation
6. Philosophical bases

Another point of view regarding modifications and revisions of home economics curricula was expressed by Albanese (1) in discussing home economics in higher education. A careful examination of home economics curricular patterns must continue, and colleges and universities must: 1) exercise selectivity in subject matter content at all levels, 2) be willing to eliminate the obsolete and duplication, 3) develop curricular that includes a balance and interrelationship between interdisciplinary offerings, and 4) find ways of integrating, relating, and applying principles and concepts to current problems.

The necessity for appraisal of an educational program is a continuing need in a world of change (39). Bebell (4) stated that changes can be legitimately made in a program only when careful evaluation suggests the strengths and weaknesses of such adjustments. Evaluation can be called the other side of the coin of curriculum development. Based on Tyler's point of view, evaluation studies can eliminate needless duplication of courses and the overloading of some institutions, and in this way

the total educational effort can be maximized.

The purposes of an evaluation were discussed by Hastings (22) in an address on curriculum evaluation. The two major purposes identified were: 1) to determine adoption-rejection of curriculum and course-content-improvement packages, and 2) to determine the need for revision or further development of curriculum materials.

Spafford (39) theorized that an evaluation study grows out of a problem arising within a department, a request to expand its offerings, or an appraisal being carried on in one of the divisions. Evaluation will be successful only to the degree that all staff members recognize the need for it and are willing to give time and thought to the project, accept findings, and make the necessary changes.

Educational Requirements

Educational requirements for a career in the fashion world vary with general economic conditions. When the economy is growing educational requirements tend to be lower; when the economy is tight firms tend to raise their educational criteria and are more selective. The educational requirement for entry-level jobs is college-oriented; only the degree or amount of education varies (36).

Individuals with the highest educational training and experience usually get better salaries and advance faster than do individuals with less education. This does not mean that an individual without a college education will not be successful in retailing, but the chances for advancement are more favorable for the college graduate. Retail executives have become more aware of the advantages of college and university training in preparing competent trainees (12). Well-educated, motivated people are in demand as employees and their opportunities to move ahead are excellent in the fashion area (18).

A study of the relevance of the general home economics curriculum as Ambassador College was conducted by Johnson (26). This study sought to determine the qualifications which potential employers of home economics trained persons desire in their employees. Sixty-one personnel executives participated in the study. Results indicated that home economics majors with business training were considered more desirable for employment than home economics majors without business training. The retail executives stated that job opportunities were offered to both general home economics majors and those in the specialized areas of home economics.

Gillespie (16) reported on a nationwide study undertaken by the School of Retailing at New York University. The purpose of the study was to elicit opinions of senior retailing executives relative to courses of study that would best prepare individuals for a career in retailing. The 144 executives evaluated 81 commonly offered courses in liberal arts, business administration, business education, home economics, and retailing. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Results revealed that 11 courses were rated essential by more than 50.0 percent of the participants. Of the 11 courses, five were taught in business administration, five in retailing, and four were taught in liberal arts divisions.

The top ranking course in the study reported by Gillespie (16) was merchandise math which was selected by 62.0 percent of the participants, and 90.0 percent rated this same course as desirable. Fashion was ranked number 18 and rated as essential or desirable by 88.0 percent of the executives while textiles, ranked number 8, was rated essential or desirable by 75.0 percent. Other clothing and textile courses received lower ratings from the participants.

Training, through academic background, trade or business school education, in-store development programs,

and/or experience, is essential for many retailing or fashion-oriented positions (12). Keys (28) pointed out that a formal education in marketing, retailing, business administration, accounting, and other related areas serves to introduce the student to the world of business.

Opportunities in fashion are numerous for trained and qualified young people. According to Dolber (11), students interested in a career in merchandising/retailing should consider a program in merchandising, retailing, or related areas in order to advance and compete for full-time jobs in business. Preparation for opportunities in fashion should include: fashion marketing, consumer motivation, sales promotion, fashion buying, merchandise math, merchandise planning, retail operations, business law, small store management, and other business-oriented courses that are offered by colleges which have specialized programs.

Retailing education available today in colleges and universities varies considerably. Retailing as a profession changes more than any other profession. Therefore, an educational program which trains potential retailers must be prepared to change at a similar pace (29). Dickinson (10) indicated that changes in retail decision-making will reflect the environment of the future. Retail education will need to prepare future

retail executives to become: 1) more skilled in the processing of data, 2) better qualified in fashion and display in order to attract target customers in a profitable manner, 3) more creative and knowledgeable about the creative process, and 4) more articulate in order to communicate more effectively at all levels of management.

Strain (42) conducted a survey relative to courses of value and competencies needed by home economics majors working in business. Responses were obtained from retailing executives and home economists in business, after eight months of interviewing. The participants identified seven business-oriented courses which would qualify home economists for careers in merchandising. These courses were: introduction to business, salesmanship, business writing, marketing, public speaking, principles of economics, and introduction to psychology.

The future of retail education in four-year colleges will be influenced by the changing environment of retailing, according to Dickinson (10). Based on Dickinson's point of view, retail training at the four-year level should include courses related to product production, fashion display, and creativity. These courses, in addition to courses already required, should provide the foundation for an adequate retailing program in colleges and universities.

Carlyle (6) conducted a study on job expectations of fashion merchandising students in order to identify relationships between student role expectations of entry level positions. The sample consisted of 89 juniors and seniors and 29 personnel executives. Descriptive analyses of data revealed a need to include introductory courses in management, marketing, or general business to provide an overview of the business world. The participants indicated that these courses may give students a different viewpoint and provide an opportunity to apply fashion merchandising education to various situations. Recommendations were made by students which suggested that all student introductory courses be required rather than elected.

Several research studies have been conducted which investigated clothing and textiles and fashion merchandising programs with respect to evaluation and program development. Evans (13) conducted a study relative to an evaluation of a clothing and textile program with recommendations for curriculum development. Responses were obtained from 160 clothing and textile graduates of Ohio State University. Results indicated that the most frequently mentioned courses relevant to the respondents' professions were clothing and textile courses and retailing and marketing. Other courses in

the top ten included field experience, history of costume, promotional strategy, and business management. The respondents considered tailoring, flat pattern design, and history of costume to be more beneficial personally than professionally.

An evaluation of the fashion merchandising program of Florida State University by graduates, retailers, and faculty was conducted by Cole (8). Results of a three-way comparison indicated that basic textile courses, advanced textile courses, fashion merchandising courses, and business and marketing courses were very valuable. Clothing construction and art applied to clothing were rated as valuable. The lowest rated courses were flat pattern design, clothing and the social order, and design for non-art majors. Generally, basic home economics courses and business related courses were rated higher by the three groups.

Lazarus (30) conducted a study relative to the improvement of academic training for retailers. The sample consisted of recent graduates from 14 different colleges who were employed in retailing. The participants were asked to rate their academic preparation and to suggest courses that should be included in designing a college retailing curriculum. Findings suggested that business courses were most valuable as preparation

for a career in retailing and that more effort should be made to develop highly specialized skills. In designing a curriculum the following courses were recommended: social psychology, organizational development, retail accounting, sales forecasting, systems analysis, effective advertising, and field experience.

The preparation of home economists for specialized training in business and management has been a concern for many years. Michael and Hunt (33) reported the results of a study performed in order to determine whether or not home economists are prepared for top jobs. Responses were obtained from 133 former graduates of home economics programs and representatives from the business profession. The participants were requested to investigate home economics curricula and make recommendations for curriculum adjustments. Results of the study revealed that business courses and public relations should be included in the total home economics curricula in order to prepare home economists for a broader range of business opportunities.

Wait (53) conducted a study regarding home economists in business who were working in the field of business and clothing and textiles. The participants included 37 home economists and 17 supervisors of these home

economists in business. Results indicated that there are numerous directions in which home economists in business may advance. The consensus of the respondents was that home economists need a better understanding of business in order to be promotable. Recommendations suggested that home economists who plan to look for jobs in business should include more training in consumer problems, administration, and management.

Qualifications and Training

Tolman (47) and Grace (18) stated that preparation for success in fashion merchandising requires a great deal of hard work, motivation, enthusiasm, and interest. For the most part, a retail career demands a keen interest in merchandise, a keen interest in people, physical stamina, and a keen understanding of fashion (48).

Results of a study performed by Baird (3) relative to college preparation of home economists in business identified specific qualities that retail employers most often emphasize. The qualities identified by retailers were: the ability to communicate, the ability to get along with people, initiative, creativity, self-confidence, physical stamina, aggressiveness, and the ability to get along with others. Decision making

skills were also considered to be very important for success in retailing. Tolman (47) stated that success in retailing requires the same personal qualifications as success in any other field of work.

A study relative to student and employee perceptions of career expectations and goals in retailing was conducted by Grace (19). The purpose of the study was to investigate career expectations and goals of fashion merchandising majors and to compare findings with retailers' expectations for trainees participating in executive training programs. The value of work experience also was examined. The sample was comprised of 9 personnel employers and 69 juniors and seniors at North Texas State University. Results indicated that both students and retailers listed three qualities as most important. The qualities selected most often by the two groups were: initiative and responsibility, ambition and motivation, and the ability to communicate with others.

Furthermore, retail participants in Grace's (19) study stated that trainees with a Master's degree would advance more rapidly than the trainee with less education. The retailers indicated that employers would place additional demands and expectations on trainees with college degrees.

A study was conducted by Carpenter (7) relative to attitudes and values of girls entering merchandising as a career. Sixty-seven young women in management, personnel, executive training, and other career-oriented positions comprised the sample. Results suggested that specialized fashion education was highly desirable for success in retailing. Also, observations were made which suggested that promotion in the merchandising field usually is influenced by employees with previous work experience.

In discussing deficiencies in retail education, Marcus (31) stated that few trainees receive adequate instruction on their jobs or stay in retailing long enough to become proficient in any area of retailing. Therefore, retail trainees should be taught how to recognize what standards to expect in merchandise at different price ranges. Retail training programs should focus on goods and customers, according to Marcus (31).

Greenwood (20) conducted a study to clarify job descriptions and job evaluation practices for selected retailing positions with emphasis on student work experiences. Participants in Stage Two consisted of 58 buyers and assistant buyers representing nine retail stores in the Central part of the United States.

There was common agreement among participating executives that the analysis of figures is a very important asset needed to successfully perform buying functions. Also, the ability to make imaginative use of consumer motivation was considered vital to job performance. Other requirements considered important included: decision making skills, judgement, merchandise information necessary to perform buying functions, human relations, organization of time, and mathematics.

Jefferson (25) theorized in her discussion on establishing minimum standards for undergraduate professional education in home economics that each profession is responsible for providing adequate preparation and training of young people. Standards of excellence can be established in order to ensure high quality programs that produce competent, qualified professional personnel. Competence can be verified by requiring individuals to meet certain standards. These standards can be used by colleges and universities in planning, updating, or evaluating all educational programs.

Internship Programs

In recent years, colleges and universities have recognized the need to develop some type of work

experience program that would provide opportunities for students to receive on-the-job training in a retail establishment. This kind of experience is often referred to as practicum, internship, apprenticeship, or field study.

An internship program is designed to provide supervised on-the-job training for students to apply academic knowledge to specific job situations in agencies and institutions outside of the college or university from which they receive credit (28). The major objective of the program is to enrich the academic experience and to prepare students for entry level positions in retailing. Experience is something that cannot be bought; the only way to get it is through work situations (18). Kimbell and Pilgeram (29) supported the theory that the primary function of education is to provide meaningful and challenging experiences designed to prepare individuals for various occupations in keeping with their aptitudes, interests, and total personality.

According to Greenwood (21), student work experiences should serve as the interface between education and business and should generate the transfer of knowledge and skills into competencies identified as requisite to successful performance of specific job functions. Specific purposes of student work

experiences were identified as: 1) to maximize the student's learning experiences relative to career-oriented goals, 2) to develop the student's ability to achieve certain performance goals, and 3) to develop the student's ability to access and direct his own achievement of specific objectives for student work experiences.

The importance of "learning by doing" has received widespread acceptance in education. Many colleges and universities emphasize fashion internships as a vital part of the curriculum (18). The concept held by many professionals is that work experience helps students learn faster and retain what they learn longer.

Kimbell and Pilgeram (29) stated that work experience programs have been developed to provide young people with opportunities not available to them within the school. These programs are cooperative efforts by the school and community that serve as a basis for sound career choices and to develop specific competencies necessary for a successful career in merchandising/retailing.

A number of colleges and universities require students to meet minimum requirements before participating in an internship program. Keys (28) indicated that basic knowledge makes learning easier as training is conducted in specific job situations.

Geissler (15) investigated student work experiences in fashion merchandising in colleges and universities to determine the current status. The sample consisted of 178 colleges and universities that offer courses in fashion merchandising. Findings revealed that most schools required prerequisite courses to the student work experience program. The courses most often mentioned were fashion merchandising, textiles, clothing construction, and marketing courses. In addition to course requirements, most colleges required a minimum Grade Point Average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale for participation in the student work experience.

In Evans' study (13), field experience was evaluated separately by 101 clothing and textile graduates who had participated in a field experience program. Results revealed that 60.5 percent of the respondents had some work experience before graduation and 28.0 percent had no work experience. Fifty-one percent of the respondents had worked in fashion-related retail establishments. Also, graduates considered field experience to be a very valuable part of their professional preparation. Field experience received a mean score of 4.23 on a scale of 1.0 to 5.0 on the professional criterion.

Previous work experience is an important factor in

the recruitment and employment of buyers, managers, and other executive personnel (36, 43). Results of research conducted by Grace (19) and Johnson (26) revealed that retail participants indicated previous work experience as an important factor in the selection of potential employees.

Retail participants in Cole's study (8) were asked to comment on the qualifications of fashion merchandising graduates with work experience as opposed to graduates without work experience. Results indicated that almost 80.0 percent of the retailers felt that a fashion merchandising graduate with work experience was more qualified in store performance than a graduate without work experience. Also, 90.0 percent of the respondents indicated that internship programs consist of sales, departmental rotation, and assignment with a department manager or buyer.

Dolber (11) stressed that work experience is extremely important and can be used as a stepping stone to more advanced careers. In some areas work experience, prior to entry into a career in fashion merchandising, is a definite requirement for a beginning position. The majority of participating retailers in Lazarus' study (30) indicated the need for on-the-job training before

entering the real world of retailing.

If occupational experience is a prerequisite for retailing jobs, then the opportunity for the work experience should be provided (14). Johnson and Swope (27) expressed the point that with current emphasis on preparation for professional occupations, every home economics major should have some occupational work experience to strengthen the classroom theory. Also, more students in home economics should be offered the opportunity to participate in these types of experiences as part of the prescribed degree program.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate college fashion merchandising curricula in terms of their effectiveness in the preparation of students for careers in fashion merchandising. Also, the needs and preparatory requirements of the fashion industry were examined in order to provide a basis for planning and updating fashion merchandising programs.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were basic to the study:

1. Retailers and graduates will cooperate in supplying desired information.
2. College fashion merchandising programs provide the knowledge and training of prospective employees that retailers desire.
3. Graduates of fashion merchandising programs can identify courses that are essential in preparing for merchandising careers.
4. Skills and knowledge required in fashion merchandising positions are obtained

through mastering college and university fashion merchandising programs.

Hypotheses

Based on the assumptions and the review of literature, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant difference between the fashion merchandising curricula and educational preparation offered by the various colleges and universities.
2. There is no significant difference between employee preparation and knowledge desired by retailers and the preparation offered fashion merchandising majors by colleges and universities.
3. There is no significant difference between the fashion merchandising preparation and training recommended by past graduates and that offered by colleges and universities.
4. There is no significant difference between employee preparation and training desired by retailers and that recommended by past graduates.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to 100 colleges and universities, 50 retailers, and 100 employed college graduates. The sample of colleges and universities was limited to those that offered a four-year fashion merchandising program and those that appeared in the 1977 College Blue Book and the 1979 College Admissions Data Service. The sample of retailers was limited to those who supervised fashion merchandising graduates and were employed in retail firms located in the Southwest. The fashion merchandising graduates were limited to persons currently employed in retailing positions in the Southwest. Data collected were limited to that obtained from college catalogs and that elicited through interviews and questionnaires. Due to the stated limitations, generalizations cannot be drawn beyond the sample.

Definition of Terms Used

Undergraduate Fashion Merchandising Program-- a four-year program of prescribed courses that leads to a baccalaureate degree.

Educational Preparation-- academic training and experience provided by colleges and universities as a requirement for graduation and to prepare students for

entry level positions in retailing.

Graduate-- an individual who has received a baccalaureate degree in fashion merchandising from a four-year institution.

Curriculum-- a sequential group of courses required for graduation from a four-year college or university (35).

Internship-- on-the-job training performed by a student in a retail establishment involving activities related to a specific career.

Southwest-- an area which includes Texas and the bordering states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.

Retailer-- a personnel manager, department manager, store manager, or any other supervisory individual who has a knowledge of the abilities and preparation of fashion merchandising graduates.

IV. PROCEDURE

This study was designed to investigate the adequacy of four-year fashion merchandising programs in the preparation of students for careers in merchandising. Information needed for this investigation necessitated the cooperation of graduates and retailers. The availability of recent college catalogs was also necessary. Data sought included opinions of graduates and retailers regarding the educational preparation and training needed for entry level positions in merchandising. Information was obtained from questionnaires, interviews, and college catalogs.

Sample and Selection

The sample consisted of 100 colleges and universities, 50 retailers, and 100 graduates of fashion merchandising. The participation of each retailer respondent was based on a voluntary interview and the completion of a questionnaire by each employed fashion merchandising graduate. In compiling the data, all participants including colleges and universities remained anonymous.

Colleges and Universities

A list of 100 colleges and universities which offer baccalaureate degrees in fashion merchandising was obtained from the 1977 College Blue Book (46) and the College Admissions Data Service (43). In order to simplify the data obtained, the colleges and universities were divided into five geographical regions (41). The five geographical regions were the following: 1) Southwest, 2) Southeast, 3) Northeast, 4) North Central, and 5) West. Of the 100 colleges and universities examined, 23 were located in the Southwest, 27 in the Southeast, 5 in the Northeast, 35 in the North Central, and 10 were located in the West. Information regarding fashion merchandising programs was obtained from catalogs and bulletins of colleges and universities that offer educational preparation and training in fashion merchandising. College catalogs were obtained from various institutions and the Registrar's Office at Texas Woman's University.

Course offerings from each college and university were compiled by title. Course titles and descriptions were examined and similar course descriptions were placed under the same title. The number of colleges and universities offering specific courses was recorded.

A total of 73 courses were recorded initially. After deliberate sensoring, 39 courses were selected for the study. During the sensoring process, courses offered by less than 5.00 percent of the colleges and universities were omitted.

A factor analysis was applied to the 39 courses in order to reduce the number to a more unwieldy number and to create a criteria for interpreting the interrelatedness of the courses. As a result of rotation, the 39 courses were grouped under 15 factors on the basis of communality of their course content. The communality and eigenvalue were calculated for the 15 factors on the basis of the factor loading values. Those factors whose eigenvalues were below 1.00 were discarded, leaving eight factors. Factor loadings were computed for all courses for each of the eight factors. A factor loading equal to or greater than 0.40 served as the criterion for determining significant factor loadings used in the interpretation of the factors. Names were assigned to the factors on the basis of significant factor loadings.

The retailer group consisted of 50 personnel managers, department managers, and/or store managers that supervised employees who had graduated from a four-year fashion merchandising program. A list of

retail establishments were obtained from the 1980 Classified Directory and from visiting the stores personally. Chain stores, branch stores, and speciality stores were contacted in order to get a cross section of retail participants.

Graduates

A group of employed males and females who had received baccalaureate degrees in fashion merchandising and were currently working in retailing comprised the group. A portion of this group was contacted at retail establishments located in major shopping centers located in the Southwest. Names of other members of this group were obtained from Fashion Merchandising Coordinators at colleges and universities located in the Southwest.

Questionnaires

Data were obtained through self-administered questionnaires and personal interviews. The questionnaires were developed and utilized in the collection of data (Appendix B). These questionnaires were used to obtain information from graduates and retailers regarding the effectiveness of fashion merchandising programs based on course evaluations.

Retailer's Questionnaire

The retailer questionnaire was developed to be used as a recording form during the interview process and was composed of two parts. Part I obtained data pertaining to the type of retail establishment, training programs, and weaknesses found in the educational preparation and training of fashion merchandising graduate employees. Part II of the retailer questionnaire obtained data pertaining to an assessment of courses usually included in fashion merchandising curricula. The retailer was asked to evaluate courses relative to desired preparation and training of students for careers in merchandising. The courses were evaluated as: 1) essential, 2) valuable, or 3) of no value.

Graduate's Questionnaire

The questionnaire for graduates was designed to obtain data relative to educational preparation and training recommended for fashion merchandising students and consisted of two parts. Part I elicited information regarding educational background and experience. Part II of the graduate questionnaire paralleled Part II of the retailer questionnaire, with one exception. A fourth category "did not have" was provided for

graduates whose educational preparation and training did not include a listed course.

The questionnaires were pretested by twenty fashion merchandising students who had acquired previous work experience in retailing. The purpose of the pretest was to test for clarity, ambiguity, and comprehension of instructions. The results of the pretest were analyzed and necessary corrections were made before the questionnaires were presented to cooperating participants.

A questionnaire was either given or mailed to each respondent who agreed to participate in the study. A cover letter (Appendix A), which explained the purpose of the study, and a return self-addressed-stamped envelope accompanied the questionnaire. A total of 225 questionnaires were distributed to graduates. Of this number, 100 useable questionnaires were returned. This constitutes approximately 44.00 percent return.

Retailer Interview

The interview allowed for personal contact with the retailer participants and permitted a thorough explanation of the study. The cover letter (Appendix A) was used as an introductory statement during the interview. A retailer questionnaire was used to record information elicited during the interview. Some of the retailer

participants agreed to complete the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed-stamped envelope when time did not allow for an interview.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Descriptive analyses were applied to data obtained from college catalogs and the demographics of the two questionnaires through the use of frequency distributions and percentages. Information obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews was analyzed statistically. A factor analysis and a one-factor analysis of variance were utilized to determine significant differences between the college curricula and educational preparation and training offered by the various colleges and universities in five regions. Chi-square analyses were utilized in order to determine relationships between educational preparation and training offered by colleges and universities and that desired by retailers; between educational preparation and training offered by colleges and universities and that recommended by graduates; and between educational preparation and training desired by retailers and that recommended by past graduates. The results were interpreted at the 0.05 level of probability considered representative of significant results. The 0.01 and 0.001 probability levels were considered as highly

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data concerning the effectiveness of fashion merchandising curricula at the undergraduate level were obtained from 100 college catalogs, 100 fashion merchandising graduates, and 50 retailers. Employee preparation as desired by retailers and fashion merchandising preparation recommended by past graduates were examined. Results are presented and discussed under the specific headings of: course offerings by colleges and universities, demographics, assessment of college courses, and statistical testing of the hypotheses.

Course Offerings by Colleges and Universities

Catalogs and bulletins from 100 educational institutions were examined and a total of 39 courses were selected. Of this number, 10 courses were in General Education, 16 were Clothing and Textile courses, and 13 were from Marketing and Retailing. A percentage distribution of colleges by number of fashion merchandising courses is presented in table 1. The largest percentage (43.00 percent) of colleges and universities offered from 20 to 24 courses.

TABLE 1.--Percentage Distribution of Colleges by
Number of Fashion Merchandising Course
Offerings

| Number of Courses ^a | Number of Colleges | Percent of Colleges |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 10 - 14 | 11 | 11.00 |
| 15 - 19 | 20 | 20.00 |
| 20 - 24 | 43 | 43.00 |
| 25 - 29 | 25 | 25.00 |
| 30 or more | 1 | 1.00 |
| Total | 100 | 100.00 |

^aMean number of courses = 21.66

The largest number of courses (30) was offered by only one percent of the colleges and universities. The calculated mean of the course offerings of the 100 colleges was 21.66 courses. Forty-four percent of the colleges and universities offered courses less than the mean number. Sixty-nine percent of the colleges and universities offered twenty or more of the selected courses.

The percentage distribution of the selected courses offered by colleges and universities is revealed in

table 2. Marketing was offered by the largest percent (93.00 percent) of the colleges and universities. Not one of the 39 courses examined was common to all 100 institutions. More than 80.00 percent of the colleges and universities offered the following courses as part of the educational preparation and training for fashion merchandising students: communication skills, social science, basic textiles, basic clothing construction, and management. Internship or field experience was offered by a total of 84.00 percent of the colleges and universities. Less than 50.00 percent of the fashion merchandising programs included the following courses: computer concepts, draping, fashion buying procedures, fashion production, consumer textiles, merchandise of accessories, fashion illustration, visual merchandising, textile economics, promotion strategy, business communications, personnel management, consumer behavior, business math, business law, and financial management. Merchandising of accessories and financial management were included in less than 10 percent of the fashion merchandising programs. Of the general education courses, communication skills, basic math, sociology, social science, general psychology, and science was offered more frequently than other general education courses. The most frequently offered clothing and textile

TABLE 2.--Percentage Distribution of the Selected Courses Offered by Colleges and Universities

| Course | Colleges and Universities | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| | Course Offered | | Course Not Offered | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| General Education | | | | |
| Communication Skills | 83 | 83.00 | 17 | 17.00 |
| Basic Math | 73 | 73.00 | 27 | 27.00 |
| Sociology | 74 | 74.00 | 26 | 26.00 |
| Art History | 76 | 76.00 | 24 | 24.00 |
| Social Science | 81 | 81.00 | 19 | 19.00 |
| Computer Concepts | 40 | 40.00 | 60 | 60.00 |
| Science | 73 | 73.00 | 27 | 27.00 |
| General Psychology | 73 | 73.00 | 27 | 27.00 |
| Journalism | 60 | 60.00 | 40 | 40.00 |
| Design Principles | 64 | 64.00 | 36 | 36.00 |
| Clothing and Textiles | | | | |
| Basic Textiles | 87 | 87.00 | 13 | 13.00 |
| Basic Clothing Const. | 82 | 82.00 | 18 | 18.00 |
| Flat Pattern Design | 66 | 66.00 | 34 | 34.00 |
| Draping Techniques | 37 | 37.00 | 63 | 63.00 |
| Tailoring | 53 | 53.00 | 47 | 47.00 |
| Fashion Merchandising | 79 | 79.00 | 21 | 21.00 |
| Fashion Buying Tech. | 48 | 48.00 | 52 | 52.00 |
| Fashion Production | 43 | 43.00 | 57 | 57.00 |
| Consumer Textiles | 32 | 32.00 | 68 | 68.00 |
| Merchandising of Access. | 6 | 6.00 | 94 | 94.00 |
| History of Costume | 53 | 53.00 | 47 | 47.00 |

TABLE 2.--continued

| Course | Colleges and Universities | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| | Course Offered | | Course Not Offered | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Textile Economics | 21 | 21.00 | 79 | 79.00 |
| Visual Merchandising | 18 | 18.00 | 82 | 82.00 |
| Fashion Illustration | 10 | 10.00 | 90 | 90.00 |
| Apparel Production | 54 | 54.00 | 46 | 46.00 |
| Internship | 84 | 84.00 | 16 | 16.00 |
| Business | | | | |
| Prin. of Accounting | 74 | 74.00 | 26 | 26.00 |
| Prin. of Retailing | 68 | 68.00 | 32 | 32.00 |
| Prin. of Selling | 66 | 66.00 | 34 | 34.00 |
| Prin. of Economics | 72 | 72.00 | 28 | 28.00 |
| Prin. of Marketing | 93 | 93.00 | 7 | 7.00 |
| Management Prin. | 88 | 88.00 | 12 | 12.00 |
| Promotion Strategy | 39 | 39.00 | 61 | 61.00 |
| Business Communications | 34 | 34.00 | 66 | 66.00 |
| Personnel Management | 27 | 27.00 | 73 | 73.00 |
| Consumer Behavior | 49 | 49.00 | 51 | 51.00 |
| Business Math | 15 | 15.00 | 85 | 85.00 |
| Business Law | 19 | 19.00 | 81 | 81.00 |
| Financial Management | 7 | 7.00 | 93 | 93.00 |

^aNumber of colleges and universities = 100

courses were: basic textiles, internship, basic clothing construction, and fashion merchandising. Marketing, management principles, and principles of accounting were

the most frequently offered business courses in fashion merchandising programs by the selected colleges and universities.

Through the use of factor analysis the 39 courses were grouped under eight different common course-content areas. The results of the factor matrix for the selected courses are shown in table 3. Four courses formed factor I (Liberal Arts): basic math, history, social science, and art history. Communication skills, science, general psychology, and economics composed factor II (Communication and Social Science). Factor III (Business Communication and Management) included journalism, business communications, and personnel management. Factor IV (Fashion Design) contained flat pattern, draping, and tailoring. Principles of retailing, promotion strategy, and business math formed factor V (Merchandising) while principles of selling formed factor VI (Salesmanship). Basic textiles, consumer textiles, and consumer behavior were grouped under factor VII (Consumerism). Principles of management formed factor VIII (Business Management).

Mean factor loading values of the eight factors were subjected to a one-factor analysis of variance. A summary of the results are presented in table 4. Significant differences were found between the colleges in the five regions relative to courses in consumerism (Factor 8).

TABLE 3. Factor Matrix for the Selected Courses

| Course | Common Factor Loadings | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII |
| | Liberal Arts | Comm. & Social Science | Business Comm. & Mgt. | Fashion Design | Merchandising | Sales-ship | Consum-erism | Business Mgt. |
| Communication Skills | 0.10 | 0.70* | -0.13 | 0.04 | -0.09 | 0.02 | -0.04 | -0.06 |
| Basic Math | 0.85* | 0.20 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.15 | 0.09 | 0.09 | -0.01 |
| Sociology | 0.83* | 0.11 | 0.05 | 0.08 | -0.00 | 0.05 | -0.00 | 0.08 |
| Social Science | 0.59* | 0.38 | 0.02 | -0.08 | 0.07 | 0.09 | 0.01 | -0.02 |
| Art History | 0.43* | 0.21 | 0.35 | -0.07 | 0.03 | 0.03 | -0.01 | 0.19 |
| Computer Concepts | 0.28 | 0.20 | 0.30 | 0.14 | 0.21 | 0.09 | -0.25 | 0.16 |
| Science | 0.23 | 0.66* | 0.01 | -0.10 | 0.01 | -0.03 | 0.05 | 0.05 |
| General Psychology | 0.06 | 0.48* | 0.18 | 0.02 | 0.07 | -0.03 | 0.00 | 0.14 |
| Economics | 0.00 | 0.46* | 0.02 | 0.09 | 0.03 | 0.17 | 0.03 | 0.05 |
| Journalism | 0.03 | 0.07 | 0.47* | -0.11 | -0.09 | 0.01 | 0.14 | -0.01 |
| Basic Clothing Const. | 0.06 | -0.06 | -0.04 | 0.24 | 0.12 | 0.03 | -0.11 | 0.03 |
| Flat Pattern Design | 0.11 | 0.01 | -0.13 | 0.69* | -0.29 | 0.08 | -0.03 | 0.07 |
| Draping | 0.13 | -0.07 | -0.03 | 0.49* | 0.08 | 0.14 | 0.17 | 0.02 |
| Tailoring | -0.01 | -0.13 | 0.04 | 0.59* | 0.09 | -0.06 | -0.03 | -0.06 |
| Basic Textiles | 0.05 | -0.04 | 0.06 | -0.01 | -0.21 | -0.16 | -0.50* | 0.04 |
| Design Principles | 0.12 | -0.00 | 0.05 | -0.00 | 0.02 | 0.06 | 0.07 | 0.03 |
| Fashion Merchandise | -0.04 | 0.04 | -0.01 | -0.07 | 0.11 | -0.11 | -0.20 | -0.16 |
| Fashion Buying Proc. | 0.04 | -0.16 | -0.15 | -0.04 | 0.28 | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.19 |
| Fashion Production | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.06 | 0.02 | 0.19 | 0.18 | 0.14 | -0.08 |
| Consumer Textiles | 0.12 | -0.07 | 0.08 | -0.07 | 0.08 | -0.01 | 0.56* | 0.02 |

TABLE 3.--continued

| Course | Common Factor Loadings | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII |
| | Liberal Arts | Comm. & Social Science | Business Comm. & Mgt. | Fashion Design | Merchandising | Sales-ship | Consumerism | Business Mgt. |
| Mdse. Accessories | 0.08 | -0.01 | -0.11 | -0.11 | 0.14 | -0.06 | -0.11 | 0.07 |
| Fashion Illustration | 0.04 | 0.09 | -0.09 | 0.06 | -0.03 | -0.16 | 0.09 | 0.04 |
| Visual Merchandising | 0.01 | 0.06 | -0.00 | -0.01 | 0.08 | 0.04 | 0.08 | -0.03 |
| History of Costume | -0.12 | 0.08 | -0.07 | 0.30 | 0.04 | 0.08 | -0.01 | 0.28 |
| Textile Economics | 0.21 | -0.23 | -0.12 | -0.13 | -0.14 | -0.07 | 0.06 | 0.25 |
| Apparel Production Tech. | 0.03 | 0.10 | 0.02 | 0.18 | 0.25 | -0.03 | 0.00 | -0.07 |
| Internship | 0.14 | 0.17 | 0.00 | 0.09 | 0.05 | 0.09 | 0.04 | 0.23 |
| Prin. of Accounting | 0.05 | -0.01 | -0.00 | 0.04 | 0.18 | 0.25 | 0.14 | 0.14 |
| Prin. of Retailing | 0.05 | 0.03 | 0.13 | 0.13 | 0.55* | 0.24 | -0.02 | -0.01 |
| Prin. of Selling | 0.17 | 0.01 | -0.03 | 0.03 | 0.14 | 0.96* | -0.05 | 0.02 |
| Prin. of Marketing | 0.13 | 0.17 | -0.04 | -0.03 | 0.05 | 0.07 | 0.11 | 0.05 |
| Management Prin. | 0.09 | 0.06 | 0.01 | -0.01 | -0.01 | 0.02 | 0.07 | 0.78* |
| Promotion Strategy | 0.11 | 0.09 | -0.18 | -0.21 | 0.56* | 0.01 | 0.21 | 0.08 |
| Business Communications | 0.16 | -0.06 | 0.74* | 0.02 | 0.03 | -0.03 | -0.09 | 0.03 |
| Personnel Management | -0.05 | 0.05 | 0.46* | -0.05 | 0.06 | -0.02 | 0.10 | -0.09 |
| Consumer Behavior | -0.03 | 0.08 | -0.03 | 0.02 | 0.20 | -0.06 | 0.51* | 0.32 |
| Business Math | 0.07 | -0.08 | 0.24 | -0.05 | 0.43* | -0.01 | 0.06 | -0.04 |
| Business Law | 0.05 | 0.04 | 0.11 | -0.13 | -0.05 | 0.08 | 0.08 | -0.03 |
| Financial Mgt. | -0.05 | -0.01 | 0.19 | -0.17 | -0.08 | 0.09 | 0.06 | -0.02 |

*Significant factor loading, ≥ 0.40

TABLE 4.--Summary of One-Factor Analysis of Variance of
Factor Loadings of Colleges in Five Regions

| Source of Variation | DF | Mean Square | F-Ratio ^a |
|--|----|-------------|----------------------|
| Liberal Arts | | | |
| Between Colleges in Five Regions | 4 | 1.16 | 1.33 |
| Within Colleges in Five Regions | 95 | 0.87 | |
| Communication and Social Science | | | |
| Between Colleges in Five Regions | 4 | 0.50 | 0.63 |
| Within Colleges in Five Regions | 95 | 0.79 | |
| Business Communications and Management | | | |
| Between Colleges in Five Regions | 4 | 1.48 | 2.06 |
| Within Colleges in Five Regions | 95 | 0.72 | |
| Fashion Design | | | |
| Between Colleges in Five Regions | 4 | 1.11 | 1.53 |
| Within Colleges in Five Regions | 95 | 0.72 | |

TABLE 4.--continued

| Source of Variation | DF | Mean Square | F-Ratio |
|----------------------------------|----|-------------|---------|
| Merchandising | | | |
| Between Colleges in Five Regions | 4 | 0.73 | 1.05 |
| Within Colleges in Five Regions | 95 | 0.69 | |
| Salesmanship | | | |
| Between Colleges in Five Regions | 4 | 0.48 | 0.47 |
| Within Colleges in Five Regions | 95 | 1.02 | |
| Consumerism | | | |
| Between Colleges in Five Regions | 4 | 1.63 | 2.48* |
| Within Colleges in Five Regions | 95 | 0.65 | |
| Business Management | | | |
| Between Colleges in Five Regions | 4 | 0.37 | 0.51 |
| Within Colleges in Five Regions | 95 | 0.74 | |

^aRatio of the Between Mean Square divided by the Within Mean Square

*Significant at the 0.05 level of probability

Demographics

Retailers

The retailers were requested to furnish the following information: 1) type of retail establishment, 2) educational training and experience desired for employment, 3) importance of on-the-job training, 4) executive training programs, 5) area of study desired for prospective employees, and 6) areas of weaknesses found in the ability and educational preparation of employees who graduated from fashion merchandising programs.

Responses of retailers indicated that they were employed in four types of retail stores. The percentage distribution of retailers by store type is presented in table 5. Results revealed that 60.00 percent of the retailers were employed in speciality stores while 20.00 percent were employed in department stores; 14.00 percent worked in chain stores and 6.00 percent were employed in discount stores.

Educational training and/or experience desired for employees by retailers were given for two job levels namely, management level positions and sales-related jobs. Results showed that 32.00 percent of the retailers indicated that a college degree with training in merchandising was needed for management level positions.

TABLE 5.--Percentage Distribution of Retailers by Store Type

| Type of Store | Retailers (N=50) | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Speciality Store | 30 | 60.00 |
| Department Store | 10 | 20.00 |
| Chain Store | 7 | 14.00 |
| Discount Store | 3 | 6.00 |

Sixty-eight percent indicated that retail experience was needed for management level positions in addition to a college degree with training in merchandising. Merchandising encompasses business, marketing, and fashion merchandising. Thirty-six percent of the retailers stated that applicants for sales-related jobs were required to have a high school diploma, and 64.00 percent included retail experience in addition to the high school diploma.

In response to the question relative to on-the-job training, all retailers stated that on-the-job training, internship, or field experience should be provided for fashion merchandising students before graduation. More than one-half of the retailers stated that they had an

executive training program for their prospective employees.

Retailers were asked to identify the area of study they considered desirable for prospective employees. Responses are shown in table 6.

TABLE 6.--Percentage Distribution of Areas of Study Desired for Prospective Employees by Retailers

| Area of Study | Retailers (N=45) | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Marketing and Merchandising | 19 | 42.22 |
| Fashion Merchandising | 12 | 26.66 |
| Marketing and Communications | 6 | 13.34 |
| Business and Public Relations | 6 | 13.34 |
| General Education | 2 | 4.44 |

The largest number of retailers (42.22 percent) identified marketing and merchandising as the areas of study most desirable for prospective employees. A total of 26.66 percent of the retailers identified fashion merchandising as desirable qualifications for employability. Both marketing and communications and business and public relations were preferred areas of study by 13.33 percent of the retailers.

Retailers were asked to identify the weaknesses

detected in the ability and preparation of fashion merchandising graduates employed in their establishment. Table 7 shows the percentage distribution of weaknesses observed by retailers. As may be noted, 28.00 percent of the retailers detected weaknesses in selling techniques, customer relations, and lack of knowledge of merchandising and retailing activities. The inability of some graduates to perform simple mathematical functions was reported by 26.00 percent of the retailers. Twelve percent of the retailers felt that fashion merchandising graduates were unable to transform academic theory into business understanding. Ten percent indicated the inability to follow directions and the unwillingness of employees to perform duties such as, checking in merchandise and cleaning glass shelves. Other weaknesses reported by the retailers were lack of communication and poor attitude as detected by equal numbers of 4.00 percent, respectively.

Graduates

The graduates were asked to indicate the college from which their degrees were granted, the total number of years of experience in merchandising, the number of years with present employer, and to rate their undergraduate education as excellent, above average, average,

TABLE 7.--Percentage Distribution of Weaknesses Detected
in the Ability and Preparation of Fashion
Merchandising Graduates by Retailers

| Weakness | Retailers (N=50) | |
|--|---------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Transforming academic education into business understanding | 6 | 12.00 |
| Selling Techniques, customer relations, lack of knowledge of retailing business | 14 | 28.00 |
| Mathematics | 13 | 26.00 |
| Lack of Communication | 2 | 4.00 |
| Poor attitude - resent having to go on floor and make sales | 2 | 4.00 |
| Inability to follow instructions and not able to adjust to performing duties such as: stocking, checking in merchandise, and cleaning glass shelves. | 5 | 10.00 |

or below average. Responses revealed that the participants received degrees from colleges and universities representing 11 different states. The percentage distribution of the graduates' degrees granted by colleges according to states is shown in table 8.

TABLE 8.--Percentage Distribution of Graduates' Degrees
Granted by Colleges According to States

| State | Number of Colleges | Number of Graduates | Percent of Graduates |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Arkansas | 2 | 18 | 18.00 |
| Colorado | 1 | 2 | 2.00 |
| Illinois | 2 | 9 | 9.00 |
| Indiana | 1 | 2 | 2.00 |
| Kansas | 1 | 5 | 5.00 |
| Kentucky | 2 | 3 | 3.00 |
| Maryland | 1 | 1 | 1.00 |
| Missouri | 1 | 1 | 1.00 |
| Oklahoma | 1 | 10 | 10.00 |
| Tennessee | 1 | 11 | 11.00 |
| Texas | 8 | 38 | 38.00 |
| Total | 21 | 100 | 100.00 |

Results revealed that the largest percentage of graduates (38.00 percent) received degrees from eight different colleges and universities located in Texas. The second largest percentage (18.00 percent) received degrees from two colleges in Arkansas. Approximately 66.00 percent of these participants graduated from colleges and universities located in the Southwest. Eleven percent of the respondents received degrees from a college in Tennessee while 9.00 percent received

training from two colleges located in Illinois. Finally, 5.00 percent of the graduates' degrees were granted by colleges in Kansas, 3.00 percent in Kentucky, 2.00 percent in Indiana and Colorado, and 1.00 percent in Maryland and Missouri.

The participants were requested to indicate the total number of years of experience they had acquired in merchandising. A tabulation of graduates by years of experience is shown in table 9. At the time of the survey, 16.00 percent of the graduates had acquired between 0.5 and 1.9 years experience in merchandising and 29.00 percent had worked from 2.0 to 3.4 years in merchandising. Approximately 34.00 percent of the graduates had received between 3.5 and 6.4 years experience; 62.00 percent had acquired less than five years of retailing experience. Sixteen percent had been employed for eight or more years in merchandising. Packard (36) stated that young people interested in fashion merchandising as a career should begin their work experience as soon as possible to get the maximum experience before they enter the real world of merchandising.

TABLE 9.--Percentage Distribution of Graduates by Years of Experience

| Years of Experience | Number | Percent |
|---------------------|--------|---------|
| 0.5 - 1.9 | 16 | 16.00 |
| 2.0 - 3.4 | 29 | 29.00 |
| 3.5 - 4.9 | 17 | 17.00 |
| 5.0 - 6.4 | 17 | 17.00 |
| 6.5 - 7.9 | 5 | 5.00 |
| 8.0 - 9.4 | 8 | 8.00 |
| 9.5 or more | 8 | 8.00 |
| Total | 100 | 100.00 |

Table 10 shows the percentage distribution of graduates by number of years with the current employer. Responses indicated that 44.00 percent of the graduates had been with their present employer from 0.5 to 1.9 years while 29.00 percent had been with their present employer 2.0 to 3.4 years. Eighteen percent of the graduates had been with their present employer less than one-half year. Nine percent of the graduates had been with their present employer 3.5 years or more. Approximately 62.00 percent of the graduates had been with their present employer for 1.9 years or less. The smallest percentage of graduates (3.00 percent) had been employed at the same retail establishment for 3.5 years or more.

TABLE 10.--Percentage Distribution of Graduates by Years With Present Employer

| Years With Present Employer | Graduates (N=100) | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Less than $\frac{1}{2}$ year | 18 | 18.00 |
| 0.5 - 1.9 | 44 | 44.00 |
| 2.0 - 3.4 | 29 | 29.00 |
| 3.5 - 4.9 | 6 | 6.00 |
| 5.0 - 6.4 | 2 | 2.00 |
| 6.5 - 7.9 | 0 | |
| 8.0 or more | 1 | 1.00 |

The participating graduates were requested to evaluate their undergraduate education and preparation in fashion merchandising. The results are shown in table 11. Findings showed that 16.00 percent of the graduates rated their undergraduate education as excellent. Forty-four percent of the graduates felt that their undergraduate education was above average, and 32.00 percent rated their undergraduate education as average. Only 6.00 percent of the graduates felt that their undergraduate preparation and training had inadequately prepared them for a career in fashion merchandising.

TABLE 11.-- Percentage Distribution of Education Evaluation by Graduates

| Education Evaluation | Graduates (N=100) | |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| Excellent | 16 | 16.00 |
| Above Average | 44 | 44.00 |
| Average | 32 | 32.00 |
| Below Average | 6 | 6.00 |

Assessment of College Courses

A list of 39 courses offered by colleges and universities in the fields of general education, clothing and textiles, and business was compiled for graduates and retailers to evaluate. The participants were asked to evaluate these 39 courses on a Likert-type scale: essential, valuable, and of no value. In order to obtain a numerical value for each course, values were assigned to the three levels as follows: essential = 3, valuable = 2, and of no value = 1.

Retailers

Table 12 shows the percentage distribution of course evaluations by retailers. Communication skills received

the highest evaluation of the general education courses by 90.00 percent of the retailers and basic math was evaluated as second most essential general education course by 80.00 percent of the retailers. Computer concepts was considered as "of no value" by 44.00 percent of the retailers and 84.00 percent felt science was "of no value." According to the trend, computer science has become a required course in fashion merchandising and retailing programs. The high percentage of retailers who indicated that computer science was of no value may be due to the fact that this sample of retailers did not have this course in their educational preparation and training.

The two clothing and textile courses receiving the highest evaluation by retailers were internship (90.00 percent) and fashion merchandise (80.00 percent). Basic textiles was evaluated essential by 68.00 percent of the retailers while visual merchandising was evaluated as essential by 76.00 percent. The clothing and textile courses regarded lowest by retailers were: flat pattern (10.00 percent), history of costume (14.00 percent), consumer textiles (12.00 percent), tailoring (12.00 percent), and textile economics (16.00 percent).

More than 70.00 percent of the retailers evaluated

TABLE 12.--Percentage Distribution of Course Evaluations by Retailers^a

| Courses | Evaluations | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| | Essential | | Valuable | | Of no value | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| General Education | | | | | | |
| Communication Skills | 45 | 90.00 | 5 | 10.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Basic Math | 40 | 80.00 | 10 | 20.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Sociology | 4 | 8.00 | 30 | 60.00 | 16 | 32.00 |
| Art History | 4 | 8.00 | 25 | 50.00 | 21 | 42.00 |
| Social Science | 2 | 4.00 | 26 | 52.00 | 22 | 44.00 |
| Computer Concepts | 4 | 8.00 | 24 | 48.00 | 22 | 44.00 |
| Science | 0 | 0 | 8 | 16.00 | 42 | 84.00 |
| General Psychology | 6 | 12.00 | 36 | 72.00 | 8 | 16.00 |
| Journalism | 10 | 20.00 | 35 | 70.00 | 5 | 10.00 |
| Design Principles | 15 | 30.00 | 26 | 52.00 | 9 | 18.00 |
| Clothing and Textiles | | | | | | |
| Basic Textiles | 34 | 68.00 | 16 | 32.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Basic Clothing Const. | 15 | 30.00 | 34 | 68.00 | 1 | 2.00 |
| Flat Pattern Design | 5 | 10.00 | 28 | 56.00 | 17 | 34.00 |
| Draping Techniques | 6 | 12.00 | 24 | 48.00 | 20 | 40.00 |
| Tailoring | 6 | 12.00 | 38 | 76.00 | 6 | 12.00 |
| Fashion Merchandising | 40 | 80.00 | 10 | 20.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Fashion Buying Tech. | 30 | 60.00 | 19 | 38.00 | 1 | 2.00 |
| Fashion Production | 21 | 42.00 | 22 | 44.00 | 7 | 14.00 |
| Consumer Textiles | 8 | 16.00 | 25 | 50.00 | 17 | 34.00 |
| Mdse. Accessories | 31 | 62.00 | 19 | 38.00 | 0 | 0 |
| History of Costume | 7 | 14.00 | 21 | 42.00 | 12 | 24.00 |
| Visual Merchandising | 38 | 76.00 | 12 | 24.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Textile Economics | 8 | 16.00 | 25 | 50.00 | 17 | 34.00 |

TABLE 12.--continued

| Courses | Evaluations | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| | Essential | | Valuable | | Of no value | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Fashion Ill. | 12 | 24.00 | 25 | 50.00 | 17 | 34.00 |
| Apparel Prod. Tech. | 10 | 20.00 | 22 | 44.00 | 18 | 36.00 |
| Internship | 45 | 90.00 | 5 | 10.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Business: Marketing and Retailing | | | | | | |
| Prin. of Accounting | 17 | 34.00 | 30 | 60.00 | 3 | 6.00 |
| Prin. of Retailing | 37 | 74.00 | 13 | 26.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Prin. of Selling | 40 | 80.00 | 10 | 20.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Prin. of Economics | 10 | 20.00 | 39 | 78.00 | 1 | 2.00 |
| Prin. of Marketing | 30 | 60.00 | 20 | 40.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Management Prin. | 38 | 76.00 | 12 | 24.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Promotion Strategy | 25 | 50.00 | 25 | 50.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Business Comm. | 30 | 60.00 | 20 | 40.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Personnel Mgt. | 35 | 70.00 | 15 | 30.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Consumer Behavior | 28 | 56.00 | 21 | 42.00 | 1 | 2.00 |
| Business Math | 24 | 48.00 | 25 | 50.00 | 1 | 2.00 |
| Business Law | 2 | 4.00 | 32 | 64.00 | 16 | 32.00 |
| Financial Mgt. | 13 | 26.00 | 35 | 70.00 | 2 | 4.00 |

^aNumber of retailers = 50

four business courses as essential. These courses were: principles of selling (80.00 percent), management principles (76.00 percent), principles of retailing (74.00 percent), and personnel management (70.00 percent). Business law was the lowest evaluated business course (4.00 percent). More than one-half of the business courses were deemed essential by 50.00 percent or more of the retailers.

All retailers or 100 percent considered 14 courses as essential or valuable (table 12). Two of these courses were from the general education area, 5 from the clothing and textile group, and 7 from the business area. The 14 courses included the following: communication skills, basic math, basic textiles, fashion merchandising, visual merchandising, merchandising accessories, internship, principles of retailing, principles of selling, principles of marketing, management principles, promotion strategy, business communications, and personnel management. The percentage of selected colleges and universities offering these 14 courses ranged from 18.00 percent to 93.00 percent (table 2). The largest percentage difference between college course offerings and retailers' evaluations existed for merchandising of accessories and financial management. Only 6.00 percent of the colleges

and universities offered merchandising accessories while 94.00 percent of the retailers considered the course as essential or valuable; only 7.00 percent of the colleges offered financial management in the fashion merchandising curricula while 96.00 percent of the retailers considered the course essential or valuable. Internship was deemed essential or valuable by all or 100.00 percent of the retailers while 84.00 percent of the selected colleges and universities offered internship in the fashion merchandising program.

Chi-square analyses were used to determine significant differences between retailers' evaluations and courses offered by colleges and universities. In order to perform chi-square distribution analyses on course evaluations, the assumption was that if a college offered a course it was essential or valuable. If colleges and universities did not offer a course, this was interpreted to mean "of no value." Retailer evaluations of essential and valuable were combined prior to performing the chi-square test relative to evaluations by the two groups. Results of the chi-square distribution analyses of courses are shown in table 13.

Results of the chi-square distribution analyses showed significant differences at the 0.05 level of

TABLE 13.--Summary of Chi-Square Distribution Analysis
of Selected College Course Offerings and
Retailers' Course Evaluations

| Courses | DF | Chi-Square Value |
|-----------------------------|----|------------------|
| General Education | | |
| Communication Skills | 1 | 7.969** |
| Basic Math | 1 | 14.685*** |
| Sociology | 1 | 0.004 |
| Art History | 1 | 5.366* |
| Computer Concepts | 1 | 2.828 |
| Science | 1 | 41.335*** |
| Social Science | 1 | 7.879** |
| General Psychology | 1 | 0.543 |
| Journalism | 1 | 7.755** |
| Design Principles | 1 | 1.689 |
| Clothing and Textiles | | |
| Basic Textiles | 1 | 3.555* |
| Basic Clothing Construction | 1 | 6.335** |
| Flat Pattern Design | 1 | 0.000 |
| Draping Techniques | 1 | 6.234** |
| Tailoring | 1 | 16.372*** |
| Fashion Merchandising | 1 | 10.527** |
| Fashion Buying Techniques | 1 | 34.316*** |
| Fashion Production | 1 | 23.468*** |
| Consumer Textiles | 1 | 52.316*** |
| Merchandising Accessories | 1 | 109.156*** |
| History of Costume | 1 | 7.762** |
| Visual Merchandising | 1 | 87.441*** |
| Textile Economics | 1 | 27.376*** |

TABLE 13.--continued

| Courses | DF | Chi-Square Value |
|-----------------------------------|----|------------------|
| Fashion Illustration | 1 | 70.384*** |
| Apparel Production Tech. | 1 | 0.985 |
| Internship | 1 | 5.183* |
| Business: Marketing and Retailing | | |
| Principles of Accounting | 1 | 7.315** |
| Principles of Retailing | 1 | 20.339*** |
| Principles of Selling | 1 | 21.983*** |
| Principles of Economics | 1 | 8.544** |
| Principles of Marketing | 1 | 3.671 |
| Management Principles | 1 | 6.522* |
| Promotion Strategy | 1 | 51.404*** |
| Business Communications | 1 | 58.929*** |
| Personnel Management | 1 | 63.480*** |
| Consumer Behavior | 1 | 35.337*** |
| Business Math | 1 | 93.873*** |
| Business Law | 1 | 37.630*** |
| Financial Management | 1 | 113.698*** |

* Significant at the 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at the 0.01 level of probability

*** Significant at the 0.001 level of probability

probability between the retailers and colleges for the following courses: basic textiles, internship, and management principles. Highly significant differences occurred for the following courses: basic math, communication skills, social science, science, journalism, clothing construction, draping techniques, tailoring, fashion merchandising, fashion buying techniques, fashion production, consumer textiles, merchandising accessories, fashion illustration, visual merchandising, history of costume, textile economics, principles of accounting, principles of retailing, principles of selling, promotion strategy, business communications, personnel management, consumer behavior, business math, business law, principles of economics, and financial management.

Graduates

Table 14 shows the percentage distribution of course evaluations by graduates. Results indicated that 70.00 percent of the graduates evaluated communication skills as essential and 63.00 percent evaluated basic math as essential. Design principles was evaluated as essential by 40.00 percent of the graduates. Sixty-one percent of the graduates felt that science was of no value in

TABLE 14.--Percentage Distribution of Course Evaluations by Graduates^a

| Courses | Essential | | Valuable | | Of no value | | Did not have | |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| | Num-ber | Per-cent | Num-ber | Per-cent | Num-ber | Per-cent | Num-ber | Per-cent |
| General Education | | | | | | | | |
| Communication Skills | 70 | 70.00 | 30 | 30.00 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Basic Math | 63 | 63.00 | 36 | 36.00 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.00 |
| Sociology | 4 | 4.00 | 54 | 54.00 | 21 | 21.00 | 21 | 21.00 |
| Art History | 6 | 6.00 | 58 | 58.00 | 23 | 23.00 | 13 | 13.00 |
| Social Science | 2 | 2.00 | 43 | 43.00 | 21 | 21.00 | 34 | 34.00 |
| Computer Concepts | 15 | 15.00 | 22 | 22.00 | 8 | 8.00 | 55 | 55.00 |
| Science | 1 | 1.00 | 19 | 19.00 | 61 | 61.00 | 19 | 19.00 |
| General Psychology | 17 | 17.00 | 55 | 55.00 | 16 | 16.00 | 12 | 12.00 |
| Journalism | 18 | 18.00 | 55 | 55.00 | 12 | 12.00 | 15 | 15.00 |
| Design Principles | 40 | 40.00 | 49 | 49.00 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 11.00 |
| Clothing and Textiles | | | | | | | | |
| Basic Textiles | 70 | 70.00 | 30 | 30.00 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Basic Clothing Const. | 58 | 58.00 | 40 | 40.00 | 2 | 2.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Flat Pattern Design | 10 | 10.00 | 48 | 48.00 | 20 | 20.00 | 22 | 22.00 |
| Draping Tech. | 10 | 10.00 | 30 | 30.00 | 24 | 24.00 | 36 | 36.00 |
| Tailoring | 12 | 12.00 | 56 | 56.00 | 6 | 6.00 | 20 | 20.00 |
| Fashion Mdse. | 86 | 86.00 | 12 | 12.00 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2.00 |
| Fashion Buying Tech. | 60 | 60.00 | 24 | 24.00 | 2 | 2.00 | 14 | 14.00 |
| Fashion Production | 50 | 50.00 | 28 | 28.00 | 10 | 10.00 | 12 | 12.00 |
| Consumer Textiles | 40 | 40.00 | 44 | 44.00 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 16.00 |
| Mdse. Accessories | 42 | 42.00 | 26 | 26.00 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 32.00 |
| History of Costume | 20 | 20.00 | 54 | 54.00 | 12 | 12.00 | 14 | 14.00 |
| Textile Economics | 42 | 42.00 | 34 | 34.00 | 8 | 8.00 | 16 | 16.00 |

TABLE 14.--continued

| Courses | Essential | | Valuable | | Of no value | | Did not have | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| | Num-ber | Per-cent | Num-ber | Per-cent | Num-ber | Per-cent | Num-ber | Per-cent |
| Fashion Ill. | 22 | 22.00 | 44 | 44.00 | 10 | 10.00 | 24 | 24.00 |
| Visual Mdse. | 70 | 70.00 | 20 | 20.00 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 10.00 |
| Apparel Prod. Tech. | 24 | 24.00 | 28 | 28.00 | 12 | 12.00 | 36 | 36.00 |
| Internship | 86 | 86.00 | 12 | 12.00 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2.00 |
| Business: Marketing and Retailing | | | | | | | | |
| Prin. of Accounting | 36 | 36.00 | 50 | 50.00 | 6 | 6.00 | 8 | 8.00 |
| Prin. of Selling | 74 | 74.00 | 16 | 16.00 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 10.00 |
| Prin. of Economics | 40 | 40.00 | 56 | 56.00 | 4 | 4.00 | 0 | 0 |
| Prin. of Marketing | 72 | 72.00 | 24 | 24.00 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4.00 |
| Management Prin. | 64 | 64.00 | 16 | 16.00 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 20.00 |
| Promotion Strategy | 46 | 46.00 | 18 | 18.00 | 0 | 0 | 36 | 36.00 |
| Business Comm. | 50 | 50.00 | 24 | 24.00 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 26.00 |
| Personnel Mgt. | 52 | 52.00 | 24 | 24.00 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 24.00 |
| Consumer Behavior | 44 | 44.00 | 38 | 38.00 | 2 | 2.00 | 16 | 16.00 |
| Business Math | 52 | 52.00 | 24 | 24.00 | 2 | 2.00 | 22 | 22.00 |
| Business Law | 12 | 12.00 | 40 | 40.00 | 8 | 8.00 | 40 | 40.00 |
| Prin. of Retailing | 80 | 80.00 | 18 | 18.00 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2.00 |
| Financial Mgt. | 22 | 22.00 | 36 | 36.00 | 0 | 0 | 42 | 42.00 |

a Total number of graduates = 100

fashion merchandising preparation and training while 19.00 percent of the colleges and universities did not include the course in their undergraduate preparation and training. Computer concepts was considered as essential by 15.00 percent of the graduates while 55.00 percent indicated they did not take this course in their undergraduate preparation and training.

Graduates' evaluations of clothing and textile courses revealed that 86.00 percent evaluated both fashion merchandising and internship as essential. Basic textiles was deemed essential by 70.00 percent of the graduates. Flat pattern design, draping techniques, and tailoring were evaluated the lowest of the clothing and textile courses by the graduates. Ten to 12.00 percent felt these courses were essential. From 2.00 percent to 36.00 percent of the graduates indicated that they did not take many of the clothing and textile courses in their undergraduate preparation.

Principles of retailing was evaluated essential by 80.00 percent of the graduates while 70.00 percent evaluated principles of selling and principles of marketing as essential. The lowest evaluated business course was business law as evaluated by 12.00 percent of the graduates. More than 25.00 percent of the

graduates indicated that they did not have the following courses in their undergraduate fashion merchandising training: business communications, promotion strategy, business law, and financial management.

Results revealed that communication skills and basic textiles were evaluated as essential or valuable by all or 100.00 percent of the graduates (table 14) while 83.00 percent of the colleges offered communication skills and 87.00 percent offered basic textiles (table 2). Only 45.00 percent of the graduates felt that science was essential or valuable and 73.00 percent of the colleges offered science. The largest percentage difference between college course offerings and graduates' evaluations occurred for visual merchandising, merchandising accessories, and business math. Ninety-eight percent of the graduates thought visual merchandising was essential or valuable while 18.00 percent of the colleges offered the course; 68.00 percent of the graduates considered merchandising accessories as essential or valuable while 6.00 percent of the colleges offered the course; and 76.00 percent of the graduates felt business math was essential or valuable while 15.00 percent of the colleges included the course in their fashion merchandising curricula.

Chi-square analyses were used to determine significant differences between graduates' evaluations and courses offered by selected colleges and universities. A summary of the chi-square values are presented in table 15. Significant differences existed at the 0.05 level for social science and tailoring. Highly significant differences existed at the 0.001 level for the following courses: communication skills, basic math, science, journalism, design principles, basic textiles, basic clothing construction, fashion merchandising, fashion buying procedures, fashion production, consumer textiles, merchandising of accessories, history of costume, visual merchandising, textile economics, internship, fashion illustration, principles of accounting, principles of retailing, principles of selling, principles of economics, management principles, promotion strategy, business communications, personnel management, consumer behavior, business math, business law, and financial management.

Course evaluations for graduates and retailers are graphically shown in figures 1, 2, and 3; mean evaluation values are presented in table 16. Observation of figures 1, 2, and 3 showed a slight difference between the evaluations of the two groups for the 39 courses examined. Of the general education courses, the mean

TABLE 15.--Summary of Chi-Square Distribution Analysis
of Selected Courses Offered by Colleges and
Universities and Graduates' Course Evaluations

| Course | DF | Chi-Square Value |
|-----------------------------|----|------------------|
| General Education | | |
| Communication Skills | 1 | 18.579** |
| Basic Math | 1 | 31.214** |
| Sociology | 1 | 5.383 |
| Art History | 1 | 0.947 |
| Social Science | 1 | 9.741* |
| Computer Concepts | 1 | 0.001 |
| Science | 1 | 23.458** |
| General Psychology | 1 | 0.003 |
| Journalism | 1 | 20.374** |
| Design Principles | 1 | 19.085** |
| Clothing and Textiles | | |
| Basic Textiles | 1 | 11.060** |
| Basic Clothing Construction | 1 | 14.222** |
| Flat Pattern Design | 1 | 0.474 |
| Draping Techniques | 1 | 0.019 |
| Tailoring | 1 | 6.585* |
| Fashion Merchandising | 1 | 15.341** |
| Fashion Buying Tech. | 1 | 63.420** |
| Fashion Production | 1 | 35.579** |
| Consumer Textiles | 1 | 53.030** |
| Merchandising Accessories | 1 | 97.358** |
| History of Costume | 1 | 16.362** |
| Visual Merchandising | 1 | 131.362** |
| Textile Economics | 1 | 58.413** |

TABLE 15.--continued

| Course | DF | Chi-Square Value |
|-----------------------------------|----|------------------|
| Fashion Illustration | 1 | 70.384** |
| Apparel Production Tech. | 1 | 0.004 |
| Internship | 1 | 11.966** |
| Business: Marketing and Retailing | | |
| Principles of Accounting | 1 | 14.881** |
| Principles of Retailing | 1 | 34.875** |
| Principles of Selling | 1 | 40.964** |
| Principles of Economics | 1 | 8.544* |
| Principles of Marketing | 1 | 0.014 |
| Management Principles | 1 | 12.766** |
| Promotion Strategy | 1 | 27.951** |
| Business Communications | 1 | 98.507** |
| Personnel Management | 1 | 71.197** |
| Consumer Behavior | 1 | 54.969** |
| Business Math | 1 | 126.445** |
| Business Law | 1 | 23.643** |
| Financial Management | 1 | 62.260** |

* Significant at the 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at the 0.001 level of probability

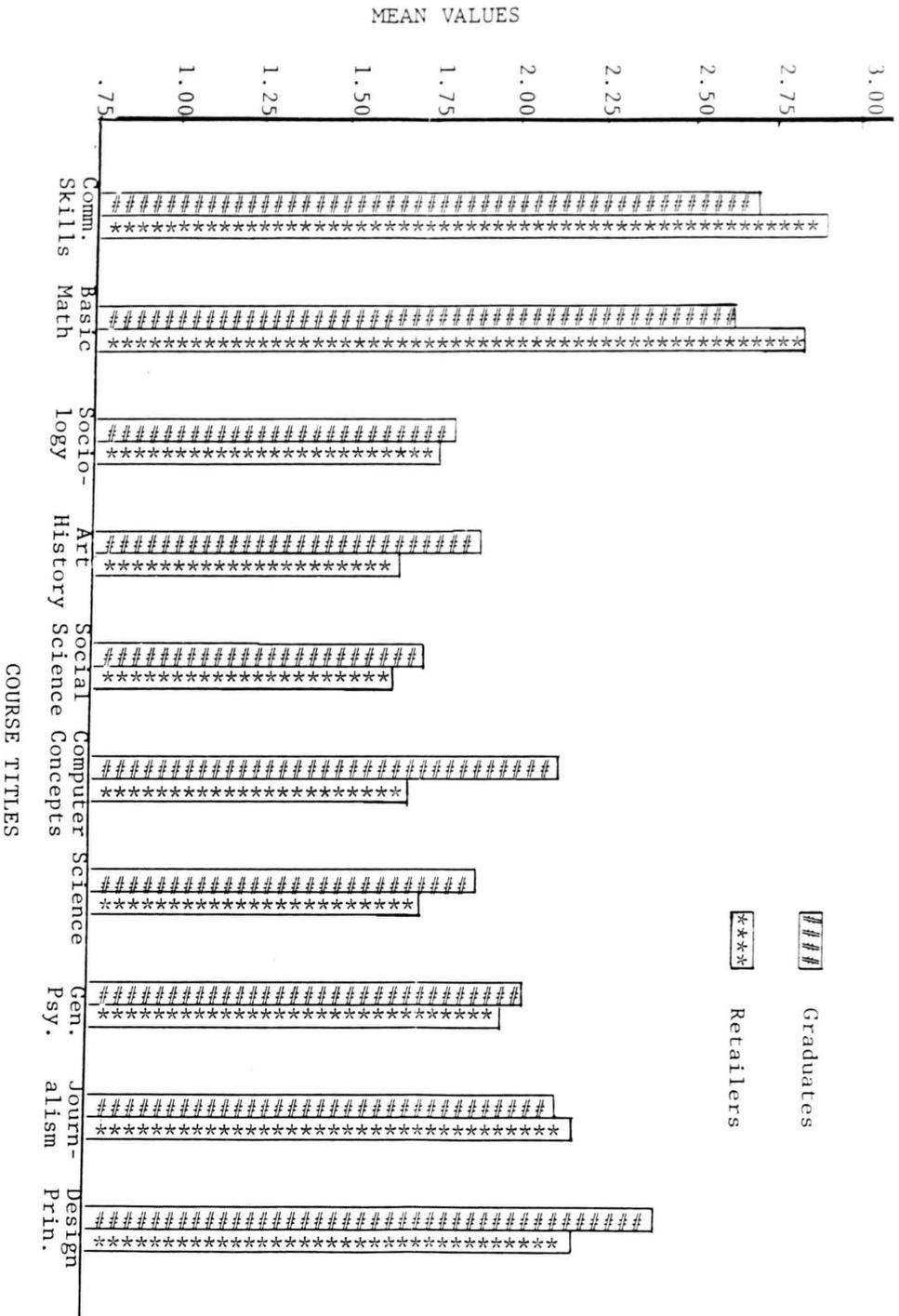


FIGURE 1.--General Education Course Evaluations by Graduates and Retailers

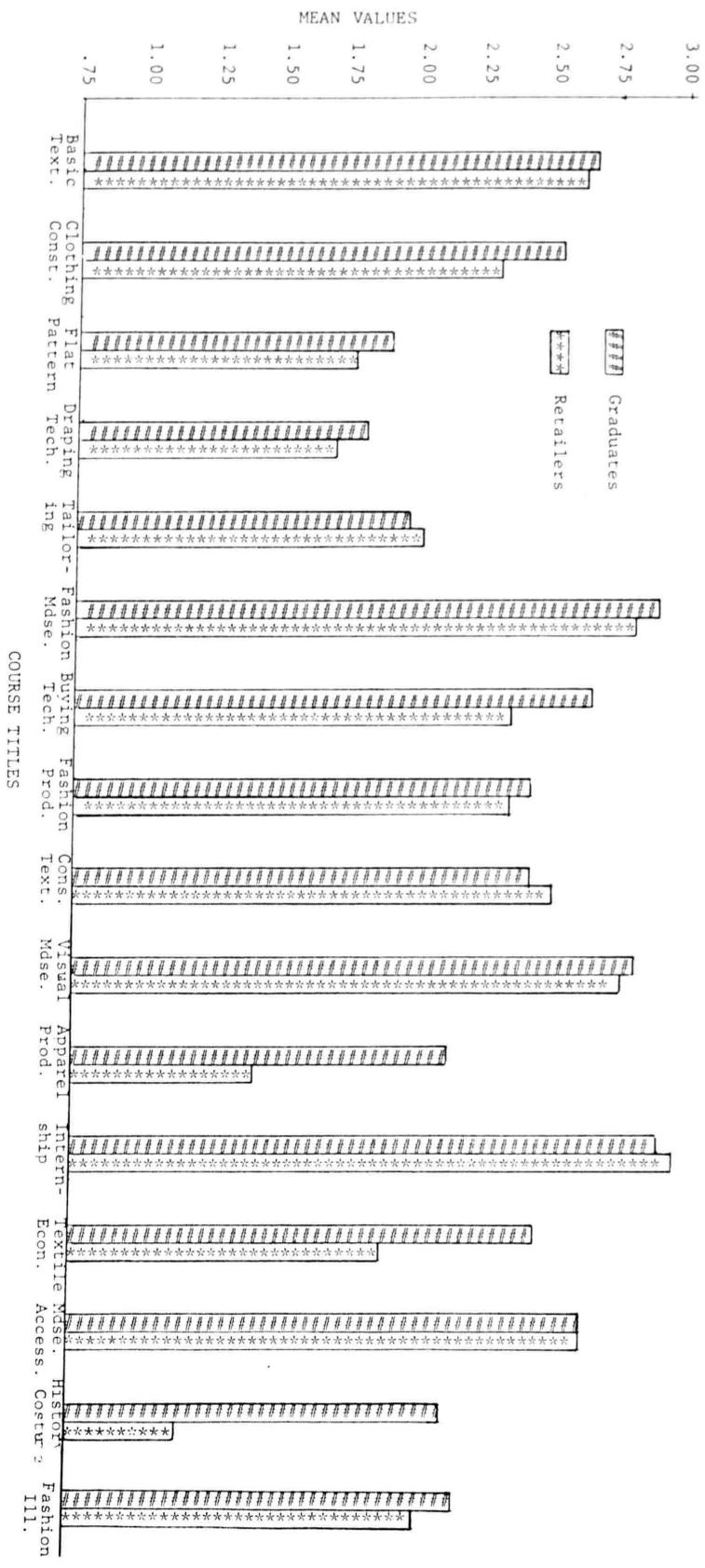


FIGURE 2.--Clothing and Textile Course Evaluations by Graduates and Retailers

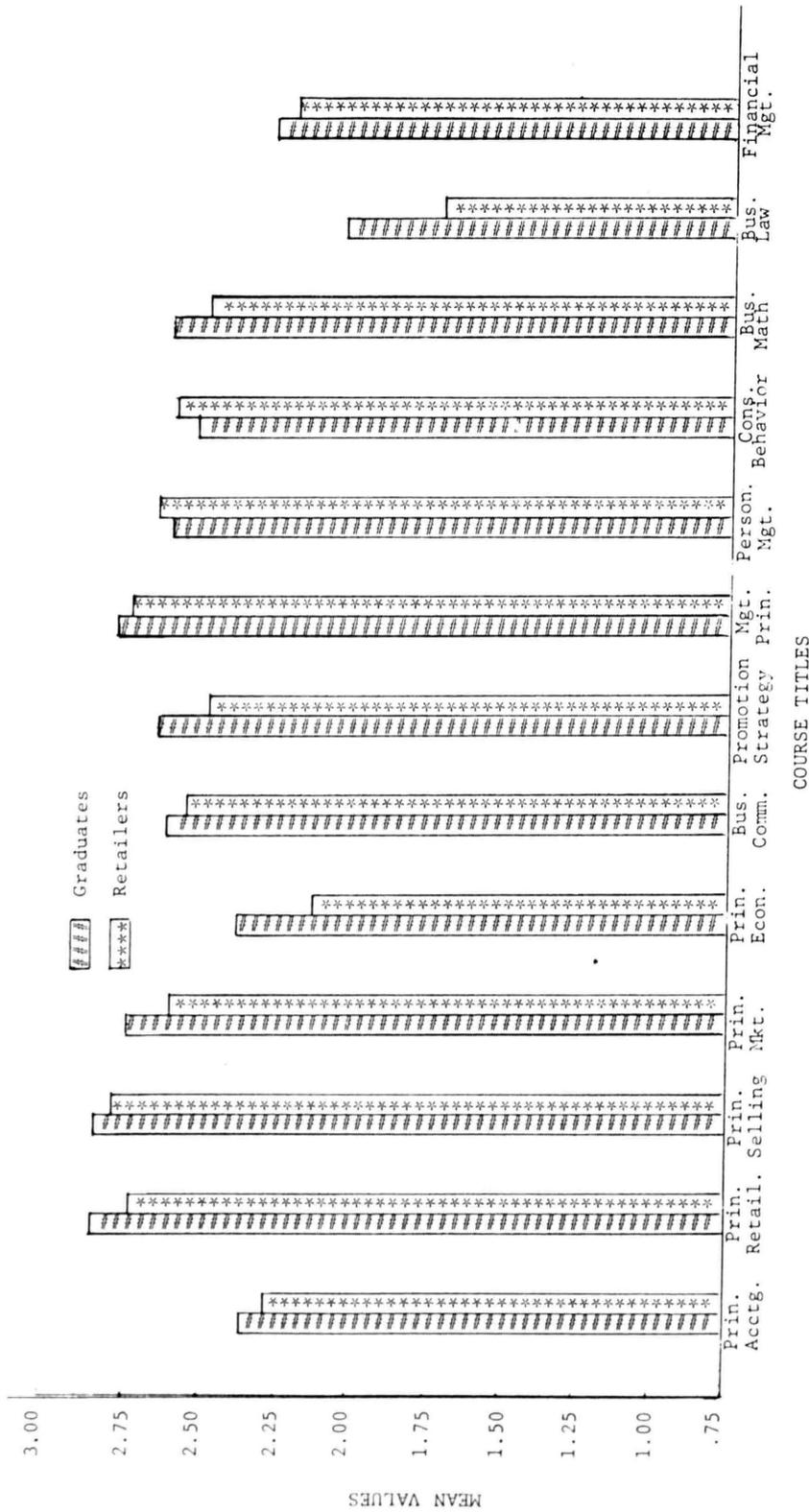


FIGURE 3.--Business Course Evaluations by Graduates and Retailers

TABLE 16.--Mean Values of Course Evaluations by Graduates and Retailers

| Course | Graduates ^a | Retailers ^b |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | Mean Value | Mean Value |
| General Education | | |
| Communication Skills | 2.70 | 2.90 |
| Basic Math | 2.64 | 2.80 |
| Sociology | 1.78 | 1.76 |
| Art History | 1.80 | 1.66 |
| Social Science | 1.71 | 1.60 |
| Computer Concepts | 2.16 | 1.64 |
| Science | 1.80 | 1.66 |
| General Psychology | 2.01 | 1.96 |
| Journalism | 2.07 | 2.10 |
| Design Principles | 2.45 | 2.12 |
| Clothing and Textiles | | |
| Basic Textiles | 2.70 | 2.68 |
| Basic Clothing Construction | 2.56 | 2.28 |
| Flat Pattern Design | 1.87 | 1.76 |
| Draping Techniques | 1.78 | 1.72 |
| Tailoring | 1.93 | 2.00 |
| Fashion Merchandising | 2.88 | 2.80 |
| Fashion Buying Techniques | 2.67 | 2.28 |
| Fashion Production | 2.45 | 2.28 |
| Consumer Textiles | 2.45 | 2.50 |
| Merchandising Accessories | 2.62 | 2.62 |
| History of Costume | 2.09 | 1.05 |
| Visual Merchandising | 2.78 | 2.76 |
| Textile Economics | 2.40 | 1.82 |

TABLE 16.--continued

| Course | Graduates | Retailers |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | Mean Value | Mean Value |
| Fashion Illustration | 2.16 | 2.04 |
| Apparel Production Techniques | 2.19 | 1.40 |
| Internship | 2.88 | 2.90 |
| Business: Marketing and Retailing | | |
| Principles of Accounting | 2.33 | 2.28 |
| Principles of Retailing | 2.82 | 2.74 |
| Principles of Selling | 2.82 | 2.80 |
| Principles of Marketing | 2.75 | 2.60 |
| Principles of Economics | 2.36 | 2.18 |
| Management Principles | 2.80 | 2.76 |
| Promotion Strategy | 2.72 | 2.50 |
| Business Communications | 2.68 | 2.60 |
| Personnel Management | 2.68 | 2.70 |
| Consumer Behavior | 2.50 | 2.54 |
| Business Math | 2.64 | 2.46 |
| Business Law | 2.07 | 1.72 |
| Financial Management | 2.38 | 2.22 |

^aMean values for graduates based on number of responses

^bNumber of retailers = 100

evaluation values were higher for graduates than retailers for most courses except journalism, basic math, and communication skills. Similarly, the mean evaluation values for clothing and textile courses were higher for graduates than for retailers. The greatest difference was observed for history of costume. The mean evaluation value for merchandising accessories was identical (2.62) for both graduates and retailers. Overall mean evaluation values for business courses were higher than mean evaluation values for either general education or clothing and textiles. Mean evaluation values for business courses suggested that graduates and retailers were almost in total agreement relative to the value of these courses except for business law. The overall mean evaluation value for all 39 courses suggests that the majority of the courses should be a necessary part of fashion merchandising preparation and training.

The data were subjected to chi-square analysis in order to compare graduates' responses with retailers' responses. A summary of the chi-square analysis for each course is shown in table 17. Results revealed that highly significant differences occurred between the graduate and retailer evaluations for the following courses: design principles and textile economics.

Highly significant differences also occurred between the two groups relative to their evaluations of computer concepts, basic clothing construction, and business law. Significant differences between evaluations of graduates and retailers resulted for apparel production techniques, principles of economics, and promotion strategy.

TABLE 17.--Summary of Chi-Square Distribution Analysis of
Graduates' and Retailers' Evaluations of
Selected Courses

| Course | DF | Chi-Square Value |
|-----------------------------|----|------------------|
| General Education | | |
| Communication Skills | 1 | 6.377* |
| Basic Math | 1 | 3.437 |
| Sociology | 2 | 1.067 |
| Art History | 2 | 3.903 |
| Computer Concepts | 2 | 12.761** |
| Science | 2 | 1.748 |
| Social Science | 2 | 2.044 |
| General Psychology | 2 | 1.548 |
| Journalism | 2 | 0.577 |
| Design Principles | 2 | 17.882*** |
| Clothing and Textiles | | |
| Basic Textiles | 1 | 0.004 |
| Basic Clothing Construction | 2 | 10.667** |
| Flat Pattern Design | 2 | 1.101 |
| Draping Techniques | 2 | 0.316 |
| Tailoring | 2 | 0.833 |
| Fashion Merchandising | 1 | 1.020 |
| Fashion Buying Tech. | 2 | 1.490 |
| Fashion Production | 2 | 2.847 |
| Consumer Textiles | 1 | 0.008 |
| Merchandising Access. | 1 | 0.028 |
| History of Costume | 2 | 4.599 |
| Visual Merchandising | 1 | 0.001 |
| Textile Economics | 2 | 20.421*** |
| Fashion Illustration | 2 | 1.182 |

TABLE 17.--continued

| Course | DF | Chi-Square Value |
|-----------------------------------|----|------------------|
| Apparel Production Tech. | 2 | 6.056* |
| Internship | 1 | 0.018 |
| Business: Marketing and Retailing | | |
| Principles of Accounting | 2 | 0.426 |
| Principles of Retailing | 1 | 0.750 |
| Principles of Selling | 1 | 0.010 |
| Principles of Marketing | 1 | 2.837 |
| Principles of Economics | 2 | 6.947* |
| Management Principles | 1 | 0.103 |
| Promotion Strategy | 1 | 4.825* |
| Business Communications | 1 | 0.453 |
| Personnel Management | 1 | 0.001 |
| Consumer Behavior | 2 | 0.171 |
| Business Math | 2 | 4.773 |
| Business Law | 2 | 9.871** |
| Financial Management | 2 | 3.756 |

* Significant at the 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at the 0.01 level of probability

*** Significant at the 0.001 level of probability

Statistical Testing of Hypotheses

Based on the hypotheses formulated for this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the fashion merchandising curricula and educational preparation offered by colleges and universities located in five regions.

A percentage distribution of fashion merchandising course offerings revealed that the number of courses offered by various colleges and universities ranged from 11 to 30 courses. Sixty-nine percent of the colleges and universities offered 20 or more courses. The largest number of courses (30) was offered by only one percent of the colleges and universities.

Results of one-factor analyses of variance revealed significant differences at the 0.05 level of probability between colleges and universities in the five regions relative to fashion merchandising courses with a strong emphasis in consumer-related courses. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was only partially supported.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between employee preparation and knowledge desired by retailers and the preparation offered fashion merchandising majors by colleges and universities.

Results of chi-square distribution analyses indicated that the educational preparation and training desired by retailers differed significantly from the preparation and training offered by colleges and universities. Highly significant differences existed at the 0.01 level of probability between retailers and colleges relative to seven courses, and at the 0.001 level relative to 18 out of the 39 courses examined. Significant differences occurred at the 0.05 level of probability between retailers and colleges regarding basic textiles. Thus, hypothesis 2 was only partially supported.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between fashion merchandising preparation and training recommended by past graduates and that offered by colleges and universities.

Results of the chi-square distribution analyses revealed highly significant differences between the preparation and training recommended by graduates and the preparation and training offered by the colleges and universities relative to 29 of the 39 courses examined. Significant differences occurred between recommendations of graduates and colleges relative to science and tailoring. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was only partially supported.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference between fashion merchandising employee preparation and training desired by retailers and that recommended by past graduates.

Results of chi-square distribution analyses showed significant differences at the 0.05 level of probability between the preparation and training recommended by graduates and retailers relative to apparel production techniques, principles of economics, and promotion strategy. Highly significant differences at the 0.01 level of probability occurred between the two groups relative to computer concepts, basic clothing construction, and business law; at the 0.001 level of probability, highly significant differences occurred between retailer and graduate responses relative to textile economics. Thus, findings partially supported hypothesis 4.

VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of four-year fashion merchandising programs relative to preparation for entry level positions in retailing. Selected courses offered by colleges and universities were examined and evaluated. Variations between selected course offerings by colleges and evaluations of courses by graduates and retailers were ascertained.

The sample consisted of 100 selected colleges and universities that offer a baccalaureate degree in fashion merchandising, 50 personnel managers, department managers, and/or store managers, and 100 employed fashion merchandising graduates.

Data were obtained from college catalogs, through personal interviews, and the utilization of two questionnaires. Information pertaining to courses offered by colleges and universities was obtained from college catalogs. Questionnaires and interviews were used to elicit information concerning the educational preparation and training needed and recommended for entry level positions by retailers and graduates. Data were subjected to one-factor analyses of variance and chi-

square distribution analyses.

The majority of the 100 colleges and universities offered from 10 to 24 of the courses examined. Forty-four percent offered fewer courses than the mean number of 21.66. Communication skills, social science, basic textiles, basic clothing construction, and management were offered by more than 80.00 percent of the colleges and universities. None of the 100 colleges and universities offered all 39 selected courses. The largest number of courses offered by any one institution was 30. Selected fashion merchandising curricula were evaluated and highly significant differences existed between retailer course evaluations and courses offered by the colleges and universities; between graduate course evaluations and courses offered by the various colleges and universities.

Generally, retailers' evaluations of selected courses suggested the need for fashion merchandising curricula with a strong emphasis in business. Two clothing and textile courses evaluated as essential by 80.00 percent or more of the retailers were internship and fashion merchandising. General education courses evaluated as essential by 80.00 percent or more of the retailers were basic math and communication skills. Results of the chi-square distribution analyses revealed

highly significant differences at the 0.01 level of significance between educational preparation and training desired by retailers and the preparation and training offered by the various colleges relative to the following courses: communication skills, social science, journalism, basic clothing construction, draping techniques, fashion merchandising, history of costume, principles of accounting, and principles of economics. Highly significant differences existed at the 0.001 level between the evaluations of the retailers and colleges relative to the following courses: basic math, science, tailoring, fashion buying techniques, fashion production, consumer textiles, merchandising accessories, visual merchandising, textile economics, fashion illustration, principles of retailing, principles of selling, promotion strategy, business communications, personnel management, consumer behavior, business math, and business law.

Of the 39 courses examined, only four were included in the educational preparation and training of all or 100.00 percent of the graduates. These courses were communication skills, basic textiles, basic clothing construction, and principles of economics. An average of 17.00 percent of the graduates indicated that many of the selected courses were not included in their

fashion merchandising preparation and training. This may be attributed to the number of courses elected rather than required. When the data relative to the educational preparation and training recommended by graduates and that offered by colleges and universities were subjected to chi-square analyses, results revealed highly significant differences for 29 of the 39 courses examined.

Results of chi-square analyses showed highly significant differences between the retailers' and graduates' evaluations of computer science, design principles, basic clothing construction, textile economics, and business law. Significant differences occurred at the 0.05 level of probability between evaluations of the two groups relative to communication skills, apparel production techniques, principles of economics, and promotion strategy.

Conclusions

Based on the data obtained and the statistical results the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Colleges and universities differ relative to fashion merchandising preparation and training.

2. Colleges and universities offer courses that are not relevant to fashion merchandising preparation and training.

3. Retailers recommend a fashion merchandising program with a strong emphasis in business.

4. Retailers and graduates strongly recommend internship or field experience prior to entry into a career in retailing.

5. Graduates indicated that the educational preparation and training did not prepare them adequately for management level positions.

Recommendations

Based on the limitations and results of this study, the following recommendations are suggested.

Curriculum Development

1. Revise or update present curriculum in terms of the effectiveness in preparing students for management level positions.
2. Eliminate irrelevant courses.
3. Continue internship or field experience programs.
4. Require more business-oriented courses.

Further Study

1. A study that compares fashion merchandising programs in four-year and two-year colleges.
2. An investigation of entry level positions and rate of advancement between graduates of four-year colleges and two-year fashion merchandising schools.
3. An investigation of the opinions of fashion merchandising graduates with different levels of experience relative to recommended training.
4. A study that compares fashion merchandising preparation and training desired by retailers with different educational backgrounds.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
COVER LETTER

Dear Friends,

I am a graduate student pursuing a doctoral degree in the Department of Textile Science and Clothing at Texas Woman's University, and I need your help in obtaining data for my research. The research concerns the educational training and preparatory requirements necessary to prepare students for careers in the fashion industry.

As you have training and experience in fashion merchandising, your knowledge and expertise is vital to the study. Please cooperate with me by completing the questionnaire, and returning it to me in the self-addressed-stamped envelope. Please do not sign your name. All responses and information will remain anonymous.

THE RETURN OF YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE WILL CONSTITUTE YOUR INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Although participation in this study in no way endangers your health or subjects you to any type of injury, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare requires us to include the following statement: No medical service or compensation is provided to subjects by the University as a result of injury from participation in research.

Yours truly,

Edith G. Neal
Graduate Student

Dr. Clarice Garrett
Major Advisor

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRES

RETAILER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

PART I

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Type of retail establishment _____
2. What type of educational training and experience is desired for employment in your store? _____

3. In your opinion, should on-the-job training be provided for fashion merchandising students? _____
4. Does your store have an executive training program? _____
5. In considering prospective employees, what area of study do you consider most desirable? _____

6. In what area (s) have you found weaknesses in the ability and educational preparation of fashion merchandising graduates? _____

PART II

EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION

ASSESSMENT OF COLLEGE COURSES

Evaluate the following courses as to the degree of usefulness in the academic preparation of students for careers in fashion merchandising. Place a check in the blank that best describes your evaluation. In the blank spaces provided, list additional courses that you feel should be included and evaluate accordingly.

A. BASIC EDUCATION

| Courses | Essen- tial | Valu- able | Of no value |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Journalism | | | |
| Sociology | | | |
| Basic Math | | | |
| Computer Concepts | | | |
| General Psychology | | | |
| Science | | | |
| Art History | | | |
| Social Science | | | |
| Design Principles | | | |
| Communication Skills | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

B. CLOTHING AND TEXTILES

| Courses | Essen- tial | Valu- able | Of no value |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Basic Textiles | | | |
| Basic Clothing Construction | | | |
| Flat Pattern Techniques | | | |
| Draping Techniques | | | |
| Tailoring | | | |
| Fashion Merchandising | | | |
| Fashion Illustration | | | |
| Fashion Buying Techniques | | | |
| Fashion Production | | | |
| Textile Economics | | | |
| Apparel Production Tech. | | | |
| Visual Merchandising | | | |
| Merchandising Accessories | | | |
| History of Costume | | | |
| Consumer Textiles | | | |
| Internship/Field Experience | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

C. BUSINESS: MARKETING AND RETAILING

| Courses | Essen- tial | Valu- able | Of no value |
|--------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Principles of Accounting | | | |
| Principles of Retailing | | | |
| Principles of Selling | | | |
| Principles of Marketing | | | |
| Principles of Economics | | | |
| Business Communications | | | |
| Promotion Strategy | | | |
| Management Principles | | | |
| Personnel Management | | | |
| Consumer Behavior | | | |
| Business Math | | | |
| Business Law | | | |
| Financial Management | | | |
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GRADUATE'S QUESTIONNAIRE

PART I

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

1. Where did you receive your college degree? _____
2. Total number of years experience in merchandising _____
3. Number of years with present employer _____
4. How would you rate your undergraduate education in preparation for a career in merchandising?

Excellent _____
 Above Average _____
 Average _____
 Below Average _____

PART II

EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION

ASSESSMENT OF COLLEGE COURSES

Evaluate the following courses as to the degree of usefulness in your academic preparation for a career in fashion merchandising. Place a check in the blank that best describes your evaluation. In the blank spaces provided, list additional courses that you have had and evaluate accordingly.

A. BASIC EDUCATION

| Courses | Essen- tial | Valu- able | Of no value | Did not have |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Journalism | | | | |
| Sociology | | | | |
| Basic Math | | | | |
| Computer Concepts | | | | |
| General Psychology | | | | |
| Science | | | | |
| Art History | | | | |
| Social Science | | | | |
| Design Principles | | | | |
| Communication Skills | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

B. CLOTHING AND TEXTILES

| Courses | Essen- tial | Valu- able | Of no value | Did not have |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Basic Textiles | | | | |
| Basic Clothing Const. | | | | |
| Flat Pattern Tech. | | | | |
| Draping Techniques | | | | |
| Tailoring | | | | |
| Fashion Merchandising | | | | |
| Fashion Illustration | | | | |
| Fashion Buying Tech. | | | | |
| Visual Merchandising | | | | |
| Fashion Production | | | | |
| Textile Economics | | | | |
| Mdse. Accessories | | | | |
| History of Costume | | | | |
| Consumer Textiles | | | | |
| Apparel Prod. Tech. | | | | |
| Internship | | | | |
| | | | | |
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