

DATE: January 30, 2012

TO: Dympna Bowles  
Dean for Curriculum and Instruction

FROM: Nancy Ostroff  
Associate Professor and Assistant Chair, Fashion Merchandising Management

RE: Practicum at Aeropostle during Winter 2012

During winter recess, I 'worked' at Aeropostle, primarily shadowing the Chief Marketing Officer during executive level meetings, and observing day-to-day business operations. I attended meetings where important merchandising decisions were made in the areas of merchandise planning, visual merchandising, marketing, design, e-commerce and production. While attending merchandising meetings I was able to see merchandise being developed in a variety of product categories. In 'Bestseller' meetings I listened while executives deciphered why some products sold better than others. Through one-on-one interviews with graphic, technical, forecast research, and apparel & accessories designers, planners, fit specialists, and merchandisers, I was able to obtain material to integrate into the courses I currently teach (FM321 Workshop in Apparel Merchandising and FM341 Product Development) as well as the 'Forecasting for Merchandisers' course I recently wrote. In addition, I now have current experiential 'stories' to pass on to my students. I was able to video and photograph short portions of meetings and fit sessions both of which can be applied to both of the aforementioned courses. Also, I was given color copy 'style sheets' depicting current collections of 'Aero' apparel, to be shared with students in all my courses to give them realistic ideas and prototypes for merchandising a line of apparel or accessories. These 'style sheets', as well as the story surrounding the process of line evolution will be used as part of a demonstration of the way to make a cohesive group of apparel or accessory items for a seasonal line or collection in FM341 and FM321. Photocopies from a marketing meeting about upcoming promotional events and a Monday morning selling report have already been shared with a colleague for use in a course that I do not teach.

The interviews and interactions with the 'Aero' associates also enabled me to secure guest speakers. For example, a technical design director (an FIT alum) will be coming to speak about Merchandising's role in the 'specification' process of production. 'Specing' (measuring) & Sizing' is a module in the FM321 Workshop in the Apparel Merchandising course.

Finally, I connected with at least ten FIT graduates, now successful Aero employees in different areas. All of these students were happy to share information with me about what and how FIT helped to prepare them for these careers. This information will be useful to share with colleagues for curricular

decisions, as well as current students who will want to know what is expected of them in today's workplace.

Since this is my second practicum I am naturally comparing it to the first. I must say that I am taking away even more from my experience at Aero, than that of my original one at Fishman Tobin in 2009. I attribute this to the 'giving' corporate culture at Aero, as well as the size, scope, and nature of the company. Fishman Tobin was a wholesale company, while Aero is a huge retailer. There were many departments from which I could learn at Aero where I was privileged to be attending a wide variety of decision-making meetings with employees of various departments. They were very open about their reports and business. Additionally, at Aero, the merchandise and its development was much more trend driven, which aside from being more interesting, was more beneficial towards my end goal of integration of material for the proposed 'Fashion Forecasting for Merchandisers' course I just wrote, as well as the courses I currently teach. Also, due to the fact that the recent majority of my industry expertise was in wholesale, I felt the void in my recent experience was in retail. I feel this experience has also helped me to ascertain what would be most beneficial to me in future practicums or even a sabbatical. I also feel that I could be helpful to colleagues who may want to select a host for a practicum.

Thank you for this opportunity. Please let me know if you would like further information.

NKO:

Cc:Robin Sackin, Chair, Fashion Merchandising Management  
Elaine Maldonado, Director, CET, TI.  
Celia Baez, Administrative Coordinator, CET