FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
HISTORICAL TIMELINE

The Fashion Institute of Technology is a selective, State University of New York (SUNY) college of art and design, business and technology, with more than 40 programs leading to associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees. Known worldwide as the premier educational institution for fashion and its related fields, FIT offers an unmatched combination of specialized curricula, in-depth liberal arts education, affordable tuition, and an extraordinary location in the center of New York City, world capital of art and commerce.

The college’s faculty—drawn from the city’s art, business, and design professionals—provide instruction rich in real-world experience, and their classes are built upon a core of traditional courses in the humanities and sciences, providing students with critical thinking abilities, communication skills, and a global perspective.

Each year, FIT serves more than 12,000 students from New York City, throughout the state, across the country, and around the world, offering full- and part-time study options, evening/weekend programs, executive training, precollege programs, and online studies. Field trips, guest lectures, internships, and sponsored competitions draw upon the vast resources of the city, and introduce students to the challenges and opportunities of their chose discipline. For those looking to gain valuable international experience, study abroad partnerships and programs are available in countries from Australia to China, Italy to Mexico.

Well-known alumni include Calvin Klein, Norma Kamali, Nanette Lepore, and Chris Madden. Whether a student’s interest is in fashion design or fashion business, computer animation or cosmetics, illustration or international trade, FIT is where creativity gets down to business.

This timeline reviews some highlights of FIT’s past.

1943  Regents Plan establishes framework for technological institutes, mainly for returning veterans and retraining of war workers, but does not include apparel industry.

1944  The Educational Foundation for the Apparel (now Fashion) Industries is granted a charter by the Board of Regents to develop a technical institute to prepare students for careers in the New York apparel industry.

FIT, with Mortimer C. Ritter as director, opens as a post-high school institute with 100 high school graduates.

1946  FIT’s evening division opens.
1948  Legislature institutes SUNY and a program for two-year community colleges is created.

1950  FIT’s first research project – on seams and pressing qualities of five new synthetic fabrics – is initiated.


Mortimer C. Ritter is named president of FIT, now the second community college of SUNY.

1953  Lawrence L. Bethel is appointed president.

FIT Alumni Association is founded.

1957  Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accredits the college’s curricula.

1958  Cornerstone is laid for FIT’s first building on West 27th Street.

1959  The new building opens with four hundred students.

Haft Auditorium, named for Morris W. and Fannie B. Haft, is dedicated. (Morris Haft was a cloak and suit manufacturer and a member of the high school’s needle craft commission.)

1961  The cornerstone of the first dormitory, Nagler Hall, is laid.

1962  Nagler Hall, named for Isidore Nagler, an FIT trustee and vice president of the ILGWU, opens in the fall.

1964  FIT establishes technical assistance program with Shenkar College, Israel.

1966  FIT’s third president, Lawrence L. Jarvie, is appointed.

1969  Groundbreaking is held for the college’s next four new buildings.

1971  Marvin Feldman is appointed president of FIT.
1973  SUNY celebrates its 25th anniversary.

1974  The Shirley Goodman Resource Center, named for the executive director of the Educational Foundation, opens. (Ms. Goodman helped draft legislation to establish the college as part of the SUNY system. Throughout her 42-year career, she was one of the driving forces behind FIT’s evolution.)

1975  The Brooklyn Museum’s costume and textile collections are loaned to FIT to launch what is to become The Museum at FIT, one of the world’s largest collections of fashion and textiles.

State Education amendment authorizes FIT to confer Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees.

Coed Hall opens.

David Dubinsky Student Center, named for the former president of the ILGWU, opens in fall.

1976  Business and Liberal Arts Center opens. First bachelor’s degree programs are offered.

1979  A State Education amendment authorizes FIT to offer master’s degree programs.


1983  FIT’s Design/Research Lighting Laboratory opens.

The Small Business Center at FIT is established.

FIT’s Export Advisory Service is launched with support of U.S. Department of Commerce.

First AAS degree program in Accessories Design is offered.

1984  FIT’s art and design programs receive accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).
1986  FIT establishes affiliation with the Politecnico Internazionale della Moda in Florence, Italy.
       Art and Design Center is named for Fred P. Pomerantz, founder of the Leslie Fay Company.

1987  FIT helps to establish the National Institute of Fashion Technology in New Delhi, India.

1988  FITs third dormitory, Alumni Hall, opens.

1989  FIT is the first college in the world to offer a BFA degree in Toy Design.

1992  Allan F. Hershfield is appointed FIT's fifth president.
       Computer-Aided Design and Communications facility, named for Peter G. Scotese, named for the former chairman and CEO of Springs Industries, is completed.
       The Administration and Technology Center is named for Marvin Feldman, the college's president from 1971 to 1992.

1993  FIT opens nation’s first Quick Response Center.

1994  The Annette Green Fragrance Foundation Studio, the first of its kind on a college campus, opens.
       FIT celebrates its 50th anniversary.

1996  Federated Department Stores help raise record-breaking $3.9 million in one night.
1997  Advertising and Marketing Communications, Direct Marketing, and Home Products Development and Marketing BS programs commence.

1998  Dr. Joyce F. Brown is appointed FIT’s sixth chief executive – the first female and African American president.
       Toy Design celebrates 10th anniversary.

1999  Cosmetics and Fragrance Marketing celebrates 10th anniversary.
       Annual FIT gala sets fundraising record, generating $4.5 million.

2000  President Brown announces unprecedented five-year, $21.3 million investment plan to address college initiatives identified through FIT’s first strategic planning process.
       FIT launches new baccalaureate degree in Computer Animation and Interactive Media.
       FIT launches e-Commerce Center.
       FIT signs agreement to assist Zhejiang Institute of Science and Technology establish a fashion college in China.

2001  Tiffany & Co. endows Elsa Peretti Professorship with a $750,000 donation to FIT.
       FIT receives $10 million gift from Jay and Patty Baker.
       FIT launches certificate program in Outerwear and Performance apparel.
       FIT announces new BFA degree in Graphic Design.

2002  FIT offers BFA degree in Accessories Design and Fabrication.
       FIT is named the number one Public Comprehensive Bachelor’s College in the North by U.S. News and World Report.
       First FIT student is named a Fulbright Scholar.
2002  FIT breaks ground for first two new buildings since 1975.

Bill Blass bequeaths $1 million to FIT.

2003  FIT forms partnership with Istanbul Technical University to establish fashion degree programs in Turkey.

FIT forms partnership with Thailand to collaborate with the Thai Garment Manufacturers Association to establish fashion school in Bangkok.

FIT offers BFA degree in Fine Arts.

FIT is first in fundraising among SUNY community colleges.

FIT announces first certificate program in Haute Couture.


FIT launches new graduate degree programs in Global Fashion Management, Illustration, and Exhibition Design.

FIT celebrates its 60th anniversary.

FIT launches first executive education program for the fashion industries.

2005  FIT announces first degree program in Visual Art Management.

FIT dedicates John E. Reeves Great Hall and opens Conference Center.

The Museum at FIT launches permanent exhibition of fashion and textile history.

FIT holds naming ceremony for the Jay and Patty Baker School of Business and Technology.

FIT announces first BFA in Photography and the Digital Image.
2006  FIT opens fourth residence hall, named for George S. and Mariana Kaufman.

    President Brown announces plan to increase the size of the full-time faculty by 20 percent within two years.

2007  FIT launches a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree program in Fashion Design in collaboration with the Politecnico di Milano, allowing students to spend one year studying in Milan.

2008  The Interior Design Department celebrates the 50th anniversary of its first graduating class.

    SUNY and the New York State Education Department approve a new Bachelor of Science degree in Technical Design, which focuses on every phase of product development.

2010  The college introduces minors offered through the School of Liberal Arts.

    SUNY and the New York State Education Department approve a new Bachelor of Science degree in Entrepreneurship for the Fashion and Design Industry, which focuses on the development and marketing of new products and services.

2012  FIT's art and design programs receive accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

    The Museum at FIT receives accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums (AAM).