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Our Legacy, Our Future
FIT Beyond 2020

07



Fashion Institute of Technology

State University of New York

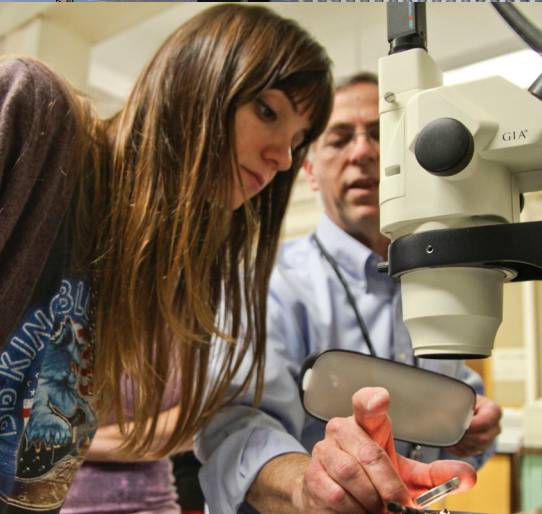


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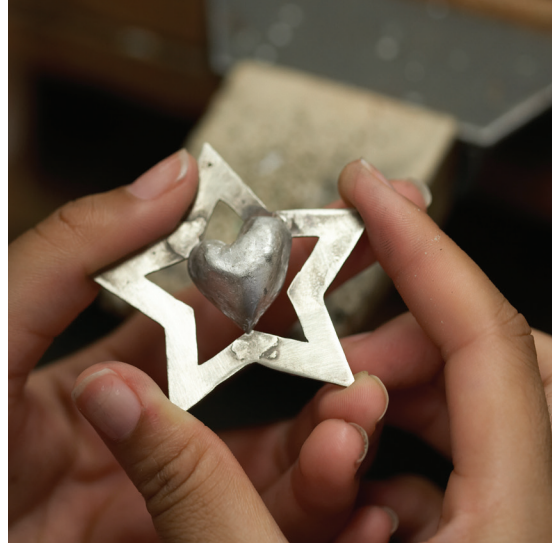
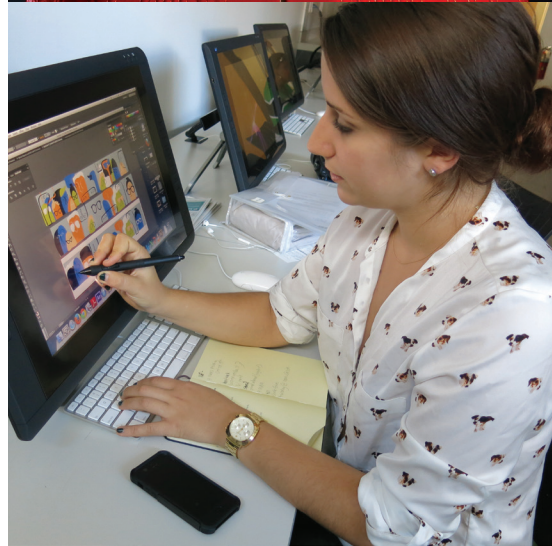
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From the President

December 2013



As we learned over the past eight years, strategic planning is an ongoing process. While we have made great strides since our last strategic plan was developed and approved in 2005, we have also had occasion to rethink our ambitions as our goals and initiatives have progressed. That led to a yearlong effort, coordinated and overseen by the FIT Planning Council, to refresh the 2005 plan by further elevating the goals we set for ourselves at that time. At the same time, we recognized the need to revisit the college's mission statement—which was more than ten years old—to align it more closely with our evolving profile.

The following pages are the result of that work. Throughout this past year, the FIT Planning Council, along with other representatives of the community—faculty, staff, students, administrators, FIT trustees and foundation directors—participated in interviews and group discussions, bringing insight and new perspectives to the development of the plan. Indeed, numerous iterations of the plan and the mission statement were shared college-wide, and both the plan and the statement incorporate ideas contributed through this process.

I believe this new plan, with its three goals and supporting strategies, offers a bold and exciting vision of the college, one with aspirations that would not have been possible just a short time ago. Built on what we have already achieved, it both reflects the way FIT has changed since 2005 and positions us for the future. Ambitious as it is, it is a plan we know we can realize because we have achieved our goals before. This refreshed version was developed in consensus by a community energized by the potential and the opportunities that FIT has today and working with the same collegiality, creativity, and zeal that made the original plan such a success. It bodes well for the future of FIT.

Dr. Joyce F. Brown
President

Introduction

Prior to the development of the 2005 Strategic Plan, FIT was a different place than it is today. By using an inclusive, engaging, and transparent process to develop that plan, the college created a community dialogue that allowed for the introduction of new ideas as well as a thoughtful re-examination of practices and hallowed traditions. FIT has continued to experience a culture change—one fueled by the energy of an engaged and committed community alert to the rapid global changes that affect curriculum and the marketplace. Our ability to reinvent ourselves—to reexamine and adapt our culture and ways of “doing business” to new circumstances—is what makes FIT such a dynamic and nimble institution. This “refreshing” of the 2005 Strategic Plan reflects both how much the College has changed—and hasn’t changed—while delineating a new set of key strategic objectives to chart its continuing growth and development.

Even as the vision articulated in this refreshed strategic plan reimagines the College for a changing world, it remains rooted in FIT’s noteworthy history and enduring strengths.

As a community college, FIT historically focused on skills training for jobs in the fashion industry. As employers increasingly indicated that they wanted more than vocational skills, we responded with a richer array of liberal arts programs designed to build critical thinking skills in our students, broaden their social and cultural awareness, and better prepare them for the responsibilities of productive citizenship. Workforce development is still a key element of our mission. However, the perspective and skills gained through the liberal arts prepare our students for both the careers they will enter on graduation and careers that don’t yet exist.

As our name implies, FIT opened its doors originally as a fashion institute. Fashion design is still our calling card. But the College expanded, as did the industry, into many branches of design, and today FIT serves the “creative industries” broadly through its wide variety of design, fine and applied arts, and business and technology programs, based on an increasingly strong foundation of liberal arts.

As a public college, part of the State University of New York, FIT remains accessible to students of diverse socioeconomic means and can draw on the resources of the 64 colleges within the SUNY system.

As a New York institution, FIT benefits from its location in one of the world’s great centers of innovation and creativity. Our students pursue experiential learning among our many industry partners. Our faculty members bring invaluable industry expertise into their classrooms. Our alumni become creative icons and business pacesetters. And in return, FIT helps define New York City’s culture and support its economic growth.



Mission and Vision

An institution's mission and vision encapsulate its identity. The mission statement describes the institution's purpose—why it exists, who it serves, and its desired impact. A vision statement is an overarching aspiration for the institution and a description of what it wishes to be five or ten years hence: what success will look like when the college achieves the goals of its strategic plan.

MISSION

FIT prepares students for professional excellence in design and business through rigorous and adaptable academic programs, experiential learning and innovative partnerships. A premier public institution in New York City, FIT fosters creativity, career focus, and a global perspective and educates its students to embrace inclusiveness, sustainability and a sense of community.

VISION

FIT will be globally celebrated as the institution where students, scholars, and teachers cross traditional disciplinary boundaries to stimulate innovation, partner with creative industries worldwide, and develop innovative design and business solutions. By focusing on the three major goals, FIT will become stronger by conscious design and be known as a strategic organization—one that applies available resources to greatest effect to achieve its vision.

1. Academic and Creative Excellence

FIT will provide a rigorous learning experience built on the highest standards of academic and scholarly excellence; an environment that promotes creativity and experimentation; and diverse experiential learning with a variety of industry partners.

2. An Innovation Center

The college will work with industries worldwide to help address key challenges, build an even stronger culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at FIT, and establish collaborations that translate creative ideas into action.

3. An Empowering Student Community

FIT will build an inclusive community in which students engage with, learn from, and inspire each other—discovering how their differences and similarities promote creativity, intellectual and personal growth, and understanding.

The college's achievements will draw their strength from FIT's strong ethos of humanity, inclusiveness, and emphasis on values.

The pages that follow articulate these goals further and describe the specific strategies FIT will undertake to achieve them.

Goals



To achieve its vision, FIT will seek to realize three key interrelated goals. This section elaborates on these three goals and their underlying major strategies.

Goal 1: Ensure Academic and Creative Excellence

Goal 2: Be an Innovation Center for Creative Industries Worldwide

Goal 3: Provide an Empowering Student Experience in a Cohesive Community

Goal 1



Ensure Academic and Creative Excellence

Provide a rigorous learning experience built on the highest standards of academic and scholarly excellence, an environment that promotes creativity and experimentation, and diverse experiential learning with a variety of industry partners.

STRATEGIES

A. Build Flexibility Into the Curriculum

FIT will ensure that its curricula and pedagogies respond nimbly to rapid changes in higher education and the industries the college serves by building responsiveness and flexibility into its academic processes. Potential initiatives include the following:

- Revise course and program curricula to create maximum flexibility, elasticity, and choice for students.
- Develop a mechanism for advancing experimental courses in a timely fashion and exploring new ways of teaching to expose students to new and developing concepts, processes, niche topics, technologies, and trends.
- Create interdisciplinary courses that allow for knowledge transfer, expand opportunities for experiential learning, and mirror collaborative approaches used in industry.
- Build a formal process for assessing such courses and evaluating their outcomes and future feasibility.
- Provide more opportunities for undergraduate participation in research, working in collaboration with or under the guidance of faculty and graduate students.

B. Encourage Greater Participation in Minors and Electives

FIT will increase access to minors and electives in ways that will enable students to take greater advantage of the college's unique offerings across schools and programs. Potential actions include:

- Review learning outcomes with the goal of reducing academic program redundancies and coordinating courses into a more interdisciplinary format.
- Establish minors in the School of Art and Design conducive to the fields of study pursued by students in the School of Business and Technology; similarly, create minors in Business and Technology of interest to Art and Design students.

C. Expand Programs in the School of Liberal Arts

FIT will continue to strengthen liberal arts education, a fundamental building block for academic excellence in all of its programs. Potential initiatives include:

- Build new liberal arts programs that take advantage of existing expertise at the college and are complementary to current programs.
- Expand current liberal arts minors to include new interdisciplinary areas.
- Continue to emphasize the development of excellent written and oral communication skills by incorporating a focus on these areas not only in the School of Liberal Arts but also in courses across all of FIT's schools and programs.

D. Require a Third-Year Shared-Experience Course

FIT will create a shared course experience for students in their third year built around such topics as sustainability and/or diversity that encourage participation by students and faculty from multiple disciplines. Such shared course experiences will foster collaboration, understanding, and respect

across disciplines—skills that are critical to career success and a global perspective. In addition, as the third-year program is developed, FIT will explore how similar shared experiences might be provided for students in their first years at the college.

E. Recruit, Develop, and Retain an Outstanding Faculty

FIT will provide support and resources to enable the ongoing professional development of its entire faculty. Potential actions include:

- Through FIT's Faculty of the Future initiative, ensure that faculty expertise and capabilities continuously promote curricular innovation.
- Undertake systematic recruitment of faculty candidates from underrepresented groups in order to increase and enrich the diversity of the faculty.
- Systematically identify faculty development needs in light of revised course and program curricula; experimental courses and teaching methods; increased interdisciplinary courses; new forms of experiential learning; and a greater emphasis on faculty research and the involvement of undergraduates in research activities.
- Provide particular focus on emerging educational technologies that have the potential to reshape the learning environment for liberal arts, art and design, and business and technology.
- Create forums for faculty to share their experiments and experiences across schools and programs and to explore how new approaches to teaching and learning can be expanded across the college.
- Define research and publication/production expectations for new and continuing faculty, while concurrently exploring how workload, release time, and sabbatical policies might be modified to support a greater level of research.
- Promote research and scholarship on teaching and learning.

F. Develop a Visiting Faculty/ Distinguished-Practitioner Program

Through a program that supports FIT faculty in research and scholarship at other institutions and hosts faculty and practitioners from other institutions/organizations at the college, FIT will raise its profile as an institution of innovative research. Potential initiatives include the following:

- Attract distinguished faculty, business thought leaders, accomplished artists and designers.
- Create opportunities for visitors to engage in short-term research at FIT in addition to being in residence for a full semester or academic year.
- Create mechanisms and incentives for FIT faculty to teach and conduct research as visiting faculty at other institutions.



Goal 2



Be an Innovation Center for Creative Industries Worldwide

Partner with creative industries worldwide to help anticipate and address key challenges, build a stronger culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at FIT, and establish collaborations that translate creative ideas into action.

STRATEGIES

A. Establish an Innovation Center@FIT to Foster Research, Creative Work, and Strategic Partnerships

The primary components of the Innovation Center will be:

- The interdisciplinary Institute@FIT, an R&D think tank that pursues a range of activities from practical problem solving to visionary forecasting.
- The Incubator@FIT, which will move projects from concept to reality using a new model that acknowledges, relates to, and intersects with ongoing local, national, and worldwide incubator initiatives.

- The FIT Collective for City Partnerships, which will intensify nonincubator research and creative collaborations with New York educational institutions, governmental agencies, nonprofits and businesses.

Through the Innovation Center, FIT will:

- Explore development of a Small Business Development Council following SUNY models.
- Pursue advanced research that will foster product development, address pressing issues in industry and the marketplace, and catalyze creative activity across disciplines.

B. Create an Organizational and Information Infrastructure That Promotes Innovation and Experimentation

- Use visiting professorships, artist residencies, and graduate fellowships to develop clusters of innovators and thought leaders focused on similar research interests.
- Build partnerships with the numerous SUNY and New York City area incubators to leverage their expertise and ensure the strongest positioning for FIT.
- Develop an FIT faculty scholar database, modeled on the similar SUNY database, to serve as a resource for researchers and artists within and outside of FIT and to raise external awareness of FIT faculty activity and achievements.
- Create faculty incentives for innovative and creative work, including support for teaching release and recognition for external and internal grants.

C. Increase the Visibility and Recognition of the Research and Creative Activities of FIT Faculty, Students, and Partners

- Develop a campus-wide culture of research and innovation, focused in the School of Graduate Studies, through such initiatives as a visiting scholars program, research fellowships for faculty and advanced students, expanded grant opportunities for high-potential projects,

links to the undergraduate schools, and enhanced collaboration with industry and other external partners.

- Undertake a comprehensive identification of research and creative work campus-wide and develop a database of current activity.
- Establish the centrality of The Museum at FIT and the Gladys Marcus Library as resources for scholars, artists, and designers in and outside of FIT and increase collaboration between the museum and library and FIT's schools.
- Launch the FIT Global Creative Content Portal, in collaboration with Gladys Marcus Library, as an access point for internal and external communities interested in research and creative work at FIT.
- Develop a series of public events related to research and creative work at the college, identifying them as FIT's Innovation Symposium Series, thus providing coherence for the many FIT events currently fragmented into individual presentations or small series.
- Create FITalks, modeled on TED Talks,¹ to showcase faculty, student and staff experts, and industry partners and stimulate greater understanding of FIT's capabilities and achievements.

¹ TED Talks is the online site of TED, a nonprofit "devoted to ideas worth spreading" that began as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: technology, entertainment, and design. The highly viewed TED Talks site provides video presentations by a diverse array of individuals on topics related to these three fields.

Goal 3



Provide an Empowering Student Experience in a Cohesive Community

Build an inclusive community in which students engage with, learn from, and inspire each other, discovering how their differences and similarities promote creativity, intellectual and personal growth, and understanding. Create FIT traditions that generate a strong sense of community and school spirit, building affinity with the college as a whole among current students and engendering loyalty among alumni.

STRATEGIES

A. Promote Greater Academic and Co-Curricular Intellectual Engagement for Students

- Create learning communities around such interdisciplinary societal issues as sustainability, diversity, and culture.
- Encourage all students to take fullest advantage of the growing flexibility and interdisciplinary opportunities in the FIT curriculum as well as participate in the overall FIT experience.
- Expand opportunities for intellectual/academic engagement through conferences, lectures, and symposia hosted on the FIT campus.
- Offer a greater range of opportunities for students to provide meaningful feedback on courses, curricula, and programs.
- Incorporate the study and practice of sustainability into the fabric of FIT curricula and the college community.
- Increase dialogue outside of the conventional “silos” of graduate and undergraduate students, alumni, faculty, staff, and administrators.

B. Make International Perspectives and Understanding Fundamental to the Student Academic and Co-Curricular Experience

- Take advantage of the significant cultural diversity of FIT's student body to introduce perspectives on cultural differences and similarities into the curriculum.
- Enhance the connection with and support of international students.
- Provide more academic and personal support services tailored to the specific needs of international students.
- Leverage FIT's international alumni to connect international students to the college before their arrival and throughout their time at FIT.
- Foster an ethos of inclusiveness that encourages sharing of cultural experiences among and between international and U.S. students at FIT.
- Increase the number of students participating in FIT's rich array of study abroad opportunities.
- Increase the number of visiting faculty/practitioners from other nations and cultures.

C. Build and Enhance Physical and Virtual Spaces That Promote a Deeper Sense of Community

- Create a well-defined campus commons for members of the FIT community and visitors.
- Create spaces on campus that encourage interaction of faculty and students outside of offices, including, for example, collaborative work spaces in the library, unreserved studio space, and lounges.

- Bring together, in a common physical location, departments with similar functions—for example, creating a “learning commons” in the library that would include the Math Emporium, Writing Studio, Academic Skills Center, and research assistance.
- Provide an IT infrastructure that encourages virtual communities and networking among FIT students regardless of their physical location.

D. Increase Alumni Engagement With FIT

- Promote the success stories of FIT students on campus, among alumni, within the industries the college serves, and to external audiences generally.
- Leverage the loyalty alumni have to the programs and departments in which they studied as a means of increasing their connection with and support of the college as a whole.
- Create a broad range of opportunities for alumni to “contribute” to the college beyond their financial donations, including such activities as mentoring current students, providing internship and career opportunities, aiding in the identification and recruitment of prospective students, and the like.
- Bring accomplished FIT alumni to campus for special events in their areas of expertise, doing so in ways that create interaction with other alumni, current students, and faculty.
- Promote lifelong learning opportunities for alumni, positioning FIT as the first stop for all of their professional development needs.



Building a Powerful Brand

The vision, goals, and strategies articulated in this strategic plan will help FIT sharpen and refresh its identity and continue to build a strong brand. Thoughtful and creative attention to strengthening FIT's brand will enable the college to achieve its vision of global recognition and acknowledgement of its special strengths and character.

In the course of the Planning Council's work, several ideas emerged that represent potential components of the FIT brand. These include:

- FIT holds a competitive advantage because it offers undergraduate programs in art and design, business and technology, and the liberal arts, as well as graduate programs in many of these fields, thus providing an interdisciplinary focus on the full range of capabilities required in the creative industries.
- The branding effort should rebalance FIT's messaging, giving more emphasis to the college's identity as a design and business school rather than as a fashion institute yet without reducing the currency the college has as a result of its recognition for fashion.
- FIT's branding initiative should expand recognition of the college's broad array of capabilities and expertise—fashion, beauty, apparel, toy design, computer animation, graphic design, and the business of the creative industries.
- The branding should emphasize FIT's role as an educational institution and as a center of innovation that helps drive the creative economy.



Implementation

Monitoring and Accountability

As the strategic plan continues to take shape, a Branding and Image Subcommittee of the Planning Council will develop specific strategies for defining and communicating the FIT brand.

With the approval of the refreshed strategic plan, FIT's real work begins: reshaping the programs, processes, and infrastructure that will allow the college to move steadily toward its new vision as a global leader in education and innovation for the creative industries.



To that end, FIT dedicates itself to ensuring academic and creative excellence, becoming an innovation center for creative industries worldwide, and providing an empowering student experience in a cohesive community. These three goals are interconnected: each stakes out an important aspect of the FIT of the future while contributing to moving the college to a new level of achievement and recognition.

Critical to the realization of FIT's vision is the prompt execution of several steps that build on the culture of assessment and accountability that has taken root in the college since its last strategic plan:

- Creating a plan to communicate the strategic plan to FIT's numerous constituencies;
- Developing an action plan outlining clear tactics that will ensure that FIT accomplishes its goals and strategies;
- Quantifying and securing the financial resources required to implement the goals of the strategic plan;
- Reviewing and revising the metrics in the FIT Report Card to align them with the new strategic plan;
- Identifying competition in order to create the appropriate benchmarks;
- Ensuring that each of the FIT schools completes and/or revisits its own strategic plan in light of the directions set by the college strategic plan;
- Implementing a monitoring process for the strategic plan at the college and school levels;
- Reviewing and updating the college's enrollment/recruitment, development/fundraising, technology, and campus master plans to reflect the priorities of the strategic plan; and
- Engaging in ongoing dialogue with the Faculty Senate and UCE of FIT, and negotiating those items that may impact terms and conditions of employment.

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APPENDIX

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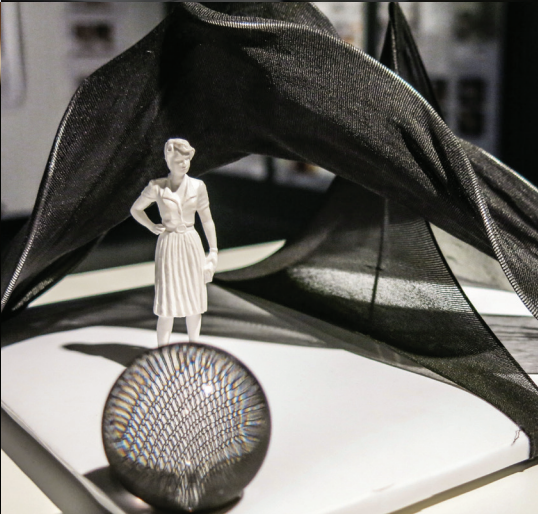
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