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WKU students to participate again in NY Fashion Week

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Aug 27, 2024



WKU fashion merchandising student Grace Ash talks with other program members on Aug. 23 in an Academic Complex classroom to plan for their trip to New York Fashion Week.

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For Kyle Hawkins, a local fashion merchandising student, assisting the designers of last year's New York Fashion Show provided a deeper perspective on the connectedness of the national fashion community.

“They were ... friends who just came together to be able to express themselves,” said Hawkins, a junior in Western Kentucky University's fashion merchandising program,

about the designers of the show – which is the premier event in the U.S. fashion industry.

“It’s a life-changing experience for a student to come from such a small area to be elevated to that position.”

On Sept. 6, he will return, alongside seven other WKU fashion merchandising students, for the program’s fourth trip since fall 2021, when program instructor Seth Howard started taking students. At the time, Hawkins had connected with his longtime friend Erin Hawker, the founder of New York Men’s Day – the initiative that opens New York Fashion Week. He had asked if they needed volunteers.

WKU’s students carry out a wide variety of services, from helping specific designers and brands set up their show spaces, to assisting dress models, to checking in guests, Howard said.

“They’re really just there to be eyes and ears and hands for the event producers and whatever they need to have done for a successful event,” Howard said.

Monique Pearson, a program third-year, expressed excitement.

“If you are passionate for fashion ... New York Fashion Week is kind of like a dream come true,” she said.

As a child, Pearson would design outfits for her two younger sisters. They would play dress-up and hold miniature fashion shows.

“(Being) an older sister and playing dress up with my younger sisters really kind of formed that love for fashion,” she said.

Cammie Case, one of WKU’s new participants, said she’s excited to get a better perspective of jobs in the fashion industry.

Case draws inspiration in her fashion from her grandmother – describing her sense of fashion as “eclectic – like grandma.” When Case was little, the two would thrift for clothes and hold tea parties. Case added that she’s always enjoyed dressing up for fun occasions.

“I really haven’t traveled anywhere super big – I’m from a really small town, so I’m just excited,” she said.

WKU senior Channing Hardin said she entered the fashion merchandising program after pursuing her marketing major and has a love for both fields.

“I just like how everybody can express themselves through their clothing,” she said. “I love the way that you can make just about anything with fabric.

Asked about her industry goals, Hardin said she would love to market for a fashion agency. But New York Fashion Week sprung to mind first.

“I would love to go to Fashion Week – which, I guess, I am,” she said.

David Horowitz