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ACADEMIC STYLIN': *WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY* RANKS UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS IN TOP 10 OF "AMERICA'S MOST FASHIONABLE COLLEGES"

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. – The fashion industry's number one trade magazine, *Women's Wear Daily (WWD)*, has selected the University of Arkansas as number six in its first nationwide survey of the top ten "America's Most Fashionable Colleges."

According to the May 1, 2003 issue, ". . . WWD's top 10 schools are a diverse lot. Our #1, NYU (New York University) is simply too cool for school. Others – particularly southern schools – were chosen for their sophisticated taste, and the quality of fashion and retail programs counted as well."

WWD's top ten list of "America's Most Fashionable Colleges" includes:

1. New York University
2. Howard University
3. Southern Methodist University
4. University of Pennsylvania
5. Wesleyan University
6. University of Arkansas
7. Purchase College - The State University of New York
8. University of Mississippi
9. Yale University
10. University of California at Berkley

The U of A does not have specific retailing major, but it does have two excellent programs for students who want to enter the field of retailing. Claudia Mobley, managing director of the Center for Retailing Excellence in the UA Sam M. Walton College of Business, said, “Women’s Wear Daily is the bible of the retail fashion industry. To be selected by the trade publication is a real coup for the University of Arkansas.”

The article cited the U of A for its close proximity to Wal-Mart, saying, “Wal-Mart’s presence saturates the region – including the U of A experience. It seems that almost everybody on campus has some connection to the retailer . . .”

WWD Editor Bridget Foley said, “. . .it’s very likely that the future ceo of Wal-Mart will hail from the University of Arkansas, thus one day influencing what much of America wears.”

The Center for Retailing Excellence works closely with Wal-Mart in several programs to help students develop their careers in retailing. For instance, each fall and spring Mobley takes a group of students to sit in on Wal-Mart’s “Big Picture” planning meetings for the fashion season a year out. Here students observe buyer and vendor discussions on future trends. This spring she arranged for several students to participate in a spring break pre-intern program where they learned the basics of the firm’s retail apparel business. As well, the Center provides study abroad scholarships, assistance to student entrepreneurial teams and brings retail executives into the classroom.

Mobley was quoted in the article as was Kathleen Smith, an instructor in the UA Apparel Studies Program, in the School of Human Environmental Sciences, Dale Bumpers College of Food, Agricultural and Life Sciences. Smith said, “Wal-Mart is screaming for apparel expertise.” The Apparel Studies program graduates about 25 students per year and offers courses in merchandising, production and computer design.

Mobley and Smith will take students to London and Paris at the end of May to look at the apparel industry there. They will actually do some “trend-spotting” for Wal-Mart and look at how the retailer’s George label is designed.

Mobley said, “We are very grateful to be able to leverage this expertise in our curriculum. The connection helps us develop students who are better prepared for the real world of retailing.”

Regarding the fashion scene at the U of A, *WWD* said, “On a warm day, students on the Fayetteville, Ark., campus can be found in the T-shirts and jeans – these vary from basic denim to the sorority sister’s Seven – playing Frisbee barefoot on the grass. An active lifestyle and a

short drive to relatively untamed country add to the outdoor vibe that's apparent in the way students dress.”

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