

## EDUCATION

University of Idaho Modifies Apparel Design for a Range of Markets. **By Kathlyn Swantko**

# Creating a Focus Beyond Fashion

**T**here is a lot of product in the market that is not on the pages of *Vogue* magazine," states Lori Wahl, clothing, textile, and design instructor at University of Idaho. "And, I think students need to be reminded about the non-*Vogue* products. Being able to encourage students to think of other target markets and end uses is so important."

The University of Idaho (UI) has been working towards broadening its design curriculum, by offering courses that explore fabrications and construction techniques geared towards other markets, and incorporating this information into existing courses.

In January, Kelsee Morefield, a UI student, competed as a contestant in the Project OR student design competition at ORWM '12, which provided further incentive for the school to modify its focus. Wahl said that UI gained a great deal from Kelsee's involvement in the competition and plans to use this experience to enhance the apparel design program going forward.

Wahl notes, "Kelsee's experience at Project OR will help us tremendously in exposing students to opportunities in the outdoor market. We are hoping to capitalize on the Project OR experience and some of the connections we made with material suppliers at the show, by incorporating some outdoor/athletic fabric options into our construction courses. This will give our students the opportunity to work on a variety of fabric types as they move through the construction and patternmaking courses."

Since Wahl's industry experience, prior to becoming an instructor at UI, included designing for such companies as Nike and Adidas, she understands how important it is for design schools to offer a broader range of apparel education, including an understanding of the product development process. Wahl explains, "Through my industry experience, I saw firsthand how people with a good knowledge of the product development process were able to accomplish many things, often under extremely tight timelines. They knew and understood all the steps in the process, and how one person's work affected the next. This is what we are in the process of teaching at UI. Our program will give students a solid product development base on which they can build and develop their own skill set."

According to Wahl, what she saw and heard at the ORWM '12 confirms that there continues to be a gap between the college graduate's interest/knowledge of the various parts of the apparel industry, other than fashion. The understanding of active-specific fabrics and construction techniques is probably the biggest weakness relating to the outdoor market.

Wahl explains, "Much of fashion is based on visual aesthetic and beautiful, traditional construction methods using delicate fabrics. When creating a garment for the outdoors, you must consider environment, the user's needs, venting, movement, ergonomic placement of pocket openings, etc. You have function and durability components that need to be met, while at the same time creating a finished garment that needs to be aesthetically pleasing and priced right."

Wahl wants to continue teaching and developing courses at UI that help students understand how all their coursework and knowledge fits together, and how to apply that knowledge to create a finished product.



**Teacher Time:** University of Idaho instructor Lori Wahl with student Kelsee Morefield' ski pant design. Wahl's career background includes designing for Nike and Adidas before she turned to teaching.

She also wants the students to feel confident that their education will carry them into a successful career in the apparel industry.

She states, "My industry work has definitely benefited me in my teaching. I can give our students examples of how to use a particular set of skills. I can explain why it is important to have accurate specs. Through the sharing of my knowledge, our students will better understand how to effectively use the information learned in their coursework to help them become successful industry employees in the future!" ●

For more information on the University of Idaho's Clothing, Textiles, and Design program, contact Lori Wahl, 503-913-3658 or [lwahl@uidaho.edu](mailto:lwahl@uidaho.edu).

Kathlyn Swantko, president of the FabricLink Network, created [TheTechnicalCenter.com](http://TheTechnicalCenter.com) for

industry networking and marketing of specialty textiles, and [FabricLink.com](http://FabricLink.com) for consumer education about everything fabric.

## The Networking Sites for the Textile Industry

**FabricLink**

[FabricLink.com](http://FabricLink.com)

Trade-to-Consumer

**The Technical Center**

[theTechnicalCenter.com](http://theTechnicalCenter.com)

Trade-to-Trade

Check out the opportunities to effectively  
get your message out!