



## **Textile and Apparel - Student Design Show**

### **Leadership Handbook**

**By**

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## **Introduction**

As part of an independent study, Heather Homan, a former TAPP Expo co-director offered to write a handbook for future aspiring show directors. Included in Heather's handbook are recommendations for effective show leadership. She organizes her document along temporal guidelines giving advice on what to accomplish in Fall and then Spring semesters.

## **Fall Semester Activities**

When you begin meeting at the start of the fall semester, you probably have a vague idea of what needs to be accomplished. Truthfully, most of the work will come one month prior to the date of the show. It is difficult to get members on your team motivated to work much earlier than this. Plus, it is really hard to start planning the look of the show until you have a good idea of what the incoming designs look like. You cannot start to organize the show until you know how many pieces will make the cut. So do not waste your time trying to nail those details down until later.

There are some things that you should try to accomplish first semester. Some of these things include funding considerations, committee selection, development of the theme and staging concepts, and promotion. Getting started on funding early is probably the most important endeavor.

## **Funding**

Start fundraising and planning the budget for next year as early as is feasible. I feel it safe to assume that most students do not understand how much it actually costs to put on a fashion show production. Until you have been in a leadership position, it is unlikely that you would be exposed to the financial aspects of the show. During my reign as director, there were many funding processes that gave me a rude awakening. Hopefully this literature will make you well aware of the financial burden you take upon yourself when you are in charge.

Overall, your show will cost around \$2500, and it could easily cost more. The single largest source of funding (over half of all the total cost) comes from the Northern Iowa Student Government (NISG). The leaders of the student organization, as well as the fashion show directors, are responsible for putting together a proposal for review at an annual NISG fund allocation meeting. This meeting take place towards the end of the spring semester and it is imperative that this deadline be paid due attention. While Jennie and I were directors, we missed the meeting. So TAA was essentially left without ANY money for the next year's show. After learning that we were responsible for such a catastrophic oversight, we researched the matter further and learned that it would still be possible to receive funding from the student government, in the form of a contingency grant. Contingency allocations will come from a fund in which money is available for student organizations that "missed the meeting". When this happens, you need to present

a really good reason to NISG as to why you were not at the meeting with the other campus organizations that required funding. This method of receiving funding is much more complicated and embarrassing, so I highly recommend getting your act together and marking your calendar for the annual funding meeting. (See example of contingency funding application in the appendix.)

So when preparing a proposal for NISG, what should you include? Well, NISG requires every expense to be itemized. Meaning, you have to estimate how much money is needed for every aspect of the show. In the past, this itemization has been very reflective of the previous year's show expenses. And as Jennie and I discovered, this may not always be a good thing. The location may not be what the previous year's directors had budgeted for, or they have put too much money towards media costs, and so on. So what you should keep in mind is to keep your itemization as general as possible. And put the majority of the money towards the staging and music costs. It was my experience that this component of the show was by far the most expensive. (Note: To date, Lang Auditorium has been the most successful location as it provides high seating capacity and professional staffing and equipment. However, you are certainly not restricted to this location)

Be sure to have historical data on hand at the meeting, such as copies of receipts from last year's show. This will only help to strengthen your argument, should question arise. Once the money has been granted from NISG, you will need to keep a copy of the budget handy at all times. Make sure that all committee chairs have a copy of the budget as well. A sample budget has been attached. The budgeted money is fairly easy to use, but it is only useable on a reimbursement basis. Every time something is purchased, a receipt must be presented to NISG, and check from the organization will be cut to the appropriate party. I found it best to use TAA money to make purchases, and then specify that NISG reimburse the club. However, sometimes committee chairs would take money out of pocket for expenses and NISG would send them a check. It works the same either way, but I always felt better not asking my committee chairs to take money from their own bank accounts to cover expenses related to the show. This was mostly due to the fact that it can take awhile to get your money back. On average, it takes around two weeks.

By now, I hope the need for fundraising has become apparent. It is nice to have a cushion of your own money that you can spend however you wish. One of the best fundraising activities you can do is cleaning the UNI-Dome after football games. Obviously, this only takes place in the fall semester, so you need to get started on this idea soon. The key is to get a lot of people to commit to helping; because it takes a long time and the more people you have to help out, the better. Jennie and I never utilized this resource, but I have cleaned the Dome for other organizations, and it really does make a significant amount of money.

The most successful fundraising activity that Jennie and I oversaw was the development of Textiles and Apparel Association T-shirts. Surprisingly, there were many people who wanted to purchase shirts. Since we found a screen-printing shop that would

do them for cheap, we were able to mark them up enough to make about a \$3 profit on every shirt sold.

There were some other valid fundraising ideas presented to the directors; we simply ran out of time because we did not have these ideas early enough in the semester. One of the best ideas that came to our attention was a program where the directors would compose a letter to parents of the students in the major, explaining the fashion show and its goals. This letter would be sent to the parents per authorization of the student. In this letter, you tactfully ask for a donation to the cause, and include a self-addressed, stamped envelop for the convenience of the donor. As with all parties that donate money to the show, (including NISG), their name will be listed in the program.

Whatever fundraising activity you choose, make sure that your idea is something that everyone is excited about. You cannot do all the work alone, or even with the help of your committee members. There are a lot of people in the program who want to help with the show, and they do not know how to get involved. Help them feel included by getting them excited about fundraising.

### **Committee Chair Selection**

Selection of committee chairs is a very important process, as these are the people who are going to put on your fashion show. In the past, committee chairs have been elected by the TAA organization, however, last year for the first time, Jennie and I implemented an application process. (See enclosed example application in the appendix) A list of the available positions, along with the corresponding responsibilities was distributed to interested individuals. Applications were due just before Winter break to allow us enough time to make an appropriate decision. Once applicants were selected for various chair positions, they were notified via email and a formal acceptance letter was given to them at the first show meeting of the spring semester. In this letter, their job responsibilities were reiterated, and we gave them a time line for the completion of their tasks.

So what committees will you need for your fashion show? This decision is entirely up to you, the only guidance I can offer is an example of the committees Jennie and I enlisted for our show.

General expectations of ALL committee chairs include the following points:

- Develop an email contact list and make sure that committee members are well informed about upcoming meetings, responsibilities, etc.
- Attend all TAA and Show meetings. If unable to attend, arrangements must be made to get any missed information from the directors.
- Schedule committee meetings/activities as needed and always inform directors of all meetings

From this point, we decided there was a need for the following committees. A list of the committees and their responsibilities follows:

### **Staging/Music**

- Assist directors with logistical tasks associated with stage design, lighting, and music
- Source materials needed for stage construction and have stage as ready as possible in time for rehearsals
- Work with directors to create a music concept for the show
- Act as main contact between the appropriate University staff and the student organization
- Enlist volunteers to assist in stage tear down immediately following the show

### **Model**

- Compile a mood board that is consistent with show theme and provides direction for the hair and make-up volunteers
- Secure dressing rooms for models and provide as many amenities as possible for hair and make-up
- Find volunteers to do hair and make-up
- Arrange and supervise choreography for models
- Keep models in order and informed during show rehearsals

### **Promotion**

- Keep the department bulletin board updated to include pertinent dates, deadlines, and show progress
- Reproduce and distribute approved literature about the show
- Responsible for all invitations
- Gather as many community and corporate sponsors as possible
- Brainstorm and execute effective and innovative advertising media

### **Reception**

- Set up area for reception after Senior presentations
- Provide a model luncheon during rehearsal on the day of the show
- Present an elegant reception of appetizers and desserts to immediately follow the show
- Conduct fundraising activities to raise money for the receptions if needed

You will quickly learn that the staging committee is your best friend. This committee has a ton of responsibility and they have a plenty of workload from the very

start. Note that their job only gets more demanding as the show approaches. You really need to have strong leaders on this team.

Model committee does not get busy until the last couple of weeks leading up to the show. Their job cannot really kick in until designs have been submitted and models have been sourced. They will be extremely busy at rehearsals. This team of students will hopefully act as a mediator between the directors and the designers. Many, many issues will arise with designers during rehearsals, and it is very time consuming for the directors to deal with problems on an individual basis. The model committee is also responsible for the well being of ALL the models. It is imperative that each model is treated with respect and courtesy, as these people are volunteering much of their free time to participate in YOUR show.

As you can see, there is a lot of work to be done. If you feel there is a need for an additional committee, create one! You are also at liberty to appoint as many committee chairs to a position as you see fit. Since I have elaborated on the importance of the staging/music and model committees, I feel there exists a need to have co-chairs for these positions. At least in these two committees, I feel that there is more work and stress than one person can handle.

### **Development of Theme and Staging Concepts**

During meetings in the fall semester, you will want to get the other students brainstorming about theme ideas. However, do not expect that anyone will ever come to a meeting prepared with a list of extraordinary theme proposals. You must present the group with ideas that you and your co-director have been formulating. Try to bring in visuals and even music if possible to facilitate the creative process. You will get a much better response this way than if you walk into the meeting and ask, "Does anyone have show theme ideas"? Do not be surprised if it takes a few meetings before everyone is comfortable with deciding on a theme. You must make sure that the majority of students are excited about the idea to ensure that they remain enthusiastic about the show. Even though you need to be patient with the theme development process, try to have it nailed down before you start taking applications for the committee chairs. There are a couple of reasons for this. One reason being that the show seems more concrete after a name has been assigned, and it may make a difference to people who wish to be involved in leadership roles. Secondly, you want the theme established as early as possible, so that designers can begin to create according to the theme, if possible.

Once a theme has been determined, it is likely that visions of stage appearance have been tossed around since the two go hand in hand. Most of the ideas you will get will be far too expensive, so it is your job as directors to make sure that all ideas being taken into consideration are financially feasible. Get as many students as possible to assist in the conceptual stage development. You will be surprised with how many good ideas you can get from people if you allow everyone to contribute!

## **Promotion**

Promotion during the fall semester is mainly within the program. As directors, you need to make sure that every student is kept informed. Speaking at the bi-weekly TAA meetings is definitely not enough. There are a lot of people who do not attend meetings for various reasons, and therefore they miss the information. Mass email updates are good, but again, there will still be people who get overlooked. Probably the best thing you can do is create a schedule of important dates and post it EVERYWHERE! Put a copy on the TAA bulletin board. Ask each professor to post a copy on his or her office door. You probably even pass them around in classes just to make sure that the word is getting out. One of the biggest problems Jennie and I ran into was lack of communication with the student body. It is very difficult to reach everyone, but it is imperative that all students remain informed. Make communication and promotion of your cause a high priority throughout the entirety of your directorship because it will make this complicated process much easier for all parties involved.

## **Spring Semester Activities**

Now that you have considered all of your preliminary work, it is time to take a look at what your spring semester will consist of. You will be very, very busy in the month leading up to the fashion show. If you make it a point to work diligently on this project throughout the course of the year, however, you will put yourself in a good position to be an effective leader. Early preparation and organization is key. There are a few activities that must take place in order for this process to move smoothly. These activities include: constant communication between directors, biweekly meetings with all committee chairs, periodic sessions with faculty, presentations at TAA meetings, development of promotional literature and show rehearsals. Much of your free time is going to be spent in meetings about the show simply because this is the biggest group project you will ever encounter. There are many people integrated into this process and you have to always make sure that everyone is kept informed.

## **Communication Between Directors**

It is important that the directors maintain a good relationship throughout the duration of the show preparation. You have to effectively work together in order to lead a large group. Countless hours will be spent in one another's company, and there will be times when conflicts arise. In the situation of a co-directorship, you are faced with two individuals with strong leadership ability and commitment to the program. Both of you will have your own visions of what you want the show to be, and on top of that, you have a large group of students who all have their own ideas as well. It is important to not discount anyone's ideas, because you want everyone to feel included. Your job as leaders is not to dictate the direction of the show, rather provide direction and focus for the group.

## **Meeting With Committee Chairs**

It is helpful when every member of the leadership is actively involved in all the decision-making processes. Try when possible to coordinate executive meetings when all of the committee chairs can attend. These meetings are a good time to clarify staging concepts and music selections. Once you have clear ideas on how to execute the theme, presenting the concepts to the group becomes much easier. Bring in demo CD's and staging boards to set the mood for your ideas. Have the model committee present hair and make-up themes that work with the staging concepts. At this point, let the students help you fine-tune the details. This is a much more effective approach than trying to hammer out the specifics in the TAA meetings where twenty-five ideas are coming to you all at once.

As the semester moves closer to show time, it will become necessary for the chairs to meet extensively with their committees. As the director, it is your responsibility to make it to as many of these meetings as you can. You need to see that all ideas are financially feasible and that they follow the theme. The committee chairs will be aware of how much money they have spend, but you and your co-director are the only ones who have the final say, so it is easier to make decisions when you are at the meeting.

## **Working With Faculty**

Keeping the faculty actively involved in the show is of the utmost importance. They have been involved with many fashion show productions and they have a lot of useful suggestions. They do not impose ideas onto you that change the direction of the show. The suggestions that come from the professors are a direct result of their desire to uphold the integrity of the program. They need to ensure that all students involved are being treated fairly and receive adequate recognition. At times it may seem like your authority is being compromised by faculty involvement. Try to look at all suggestions objectively and always remember that they are only looking out for the best interest of the students.

## **Presentations at TAA Meetings**

The TAA meetings during the spring semester will become overrun with show discussions. If you and the TAA president can maintain meeting attendance, this can be a really effective forum for working on the show. As I discussed previously, it helps if you present the group with strong ideas and allow them to help you work out the fine details. Make sure that you are prepared for the meetings, and require your committee chairs to attend. They should not all need to present at each meeting, but it is important that they are there to field any questions. Note: Try not to let the meeting last longer than an hour as attendance will rapidly decline if the meeting become long winded.

## **Development of Promotion**

There are three ways in which the promotion has historically been developed. The most common form of development occurs when the creative process is opened up to all interested students. Any student interested in creating a standard image/format for the promotional literature is required to present their ideas and visuals to the group. After all entries have been reviewed, the students vote to determine the most appropriate promotional literature.

The second way promotion had been created is through the Fashion Promotion class that is offered in the spring. If the professor of this class feels that creation of promotional materials for the show is something should be incorporated into the curriculum, you will have ideas to choose from resulting from this project. Again, I think historically, the student organization has voted to decide which submission will be used for promotion.

Finally, the directors of the show can be solely responsible for the creation of all show promotion. This method has worked very well in the past, but it has strong disadvantages. It takes away from student involvement and it does not allow any choices. Unless one of the co-directors is extremely artistically inclined (which was the case when this method was utilized), this method should not be used.

## **Show Rehearsals**

Show rehearsals are where all your hard work finally comes together. But this will also prove to be the most stressful point of your entire directorship. You need to see that all runs smoothly, while maintaining your patience and sanity. For the first time you will be working with the models, and it is imperative that you treat your models and designers with respect at all times. If rehearsals are going to run long, provide breaks and refreshments if you have the money to do so. Always thank everyone for his or her time, and try not to take everything so seriously. Your attitude will set the tone for the show rehearsals. Everyone is looking to the directors to provide instruction and order at this time of complete chaos. You need to have fun with this experience, so that everyone else involved can have fun as well.

## **Preparation**

One of the best things you can do is develop a rehearsal schedule. This itinerary will need to be tentatively formulated before designers begin looking for models, as the models will need to plan their lives according to our rehearsal schedule. It is customary to have the models attend two nights of rehearsal prior to show day, with a full dress run-through on the day of the show. The times may vary depending on the availability of the venue, but rehearsals typically run for four hours at a time. You have ample time to run through to ensure that the models are comfortable on stage and that everyone is well

aware of the order of the show. The more you can practice, the better, because the show will run a lot more smoothly.

### **Rehearsal One**

The first rehearsal should focus on choreography. Bring someone in who has worked on previous shows to demonstrate how the models should carry themselves. Run the models up and down the runway in groups of two and provide coaching on ways they can improve their stage presence. Have the designers on hand to supervise, as they may have some of their own ideas as to how they want their models to carry themselves.

You need to get the models familiar with their surroundings. There is no need for full dress at this point, unless you feel it necessary. The models should however, wear the shoes that accompany their designer's piece because it is imperative for the models to get used to walking on the runway in the shoes that they will be wearing on show night. The models need to practice primarily of the catwalk with actual music, and in sequence as much as possible. Many times, there will be models who are unable to make it to one of the rehearsals for various reasons, and although this is not desirable, you will have to be somewhat flexible. The designer should stand in line and walk the runway in place of the missing model, just so that the timing and sequence of the show does not get thrown off because of an absence. However, do not tolerate excessive absence, as it is critical that ALL models make it to the final dress rehearsals the night before the show and on the day of the show.

During this first rehearsal, the staging committee is usually working on the stage as you can only get into the venue during certain times. If possible, try to have the runway built before the start of the first rehearsal, so that the models can practice on the actual runway. If this is not achievable, it may be necessary to compromise and find another location to practice the choreography until the runway is completed.

### **Rehearsal Two**

The entirety of the second rehearsal should be spent in full dress. Run through the show as many times as you can, and try to emulate the atmosphere of show night with actual lighting sequences. This is a good opportunity to work out timing issues with music and lighting. Depending on your goals for the show music, the timing may be critical for the show's success. Often times, the music is used to signal a change in mood from one show section to the next, so it is important that the models stay consistent and on time.

This rehearsal should require mandatory attendance because it will be a full dress run-through. Under extreme circumstances, a model may need to miss all or part of the rehearsal, but you must be strict on attendance requirements. If you have an itinerary planned early, there should be very little room for excuse. If you find yourself with a problematic situation, it may be necessary to either replace the model or pull the piece from the show. The latter option is not advised for many reasons, but may need to be

implemented if no suitable replacement can be found. If you do need to pull a piece completely from the show, the decision to do so really needs to be supported by the faculty.

### **Show Day**

It has been debated whether or not run-throughs need to occur on the day of the show. This is a decision that you will need to make on your own. In the past, a dress run-through has been required on show day, because there were models who were unable to make it to one of the previous rehearsals. If attendance requirements are strict, however, you may eliminate this need.

The day of the show does not allow for much rehearsal time because there are other tasks that need to be completed. As you may also be aware, there are senior presentations that take place the morning of the show. This is something you will have to work around, because the whole premise behind having this event on show day is that parents will already be in town for the show. There will be many people involved in the show who have to present in the morning, so any rehearsals or other preparations will not be able to take place until the afternoon.

Hair and make-up need to take place at some point and note that this task is a huge endeavor. You need to allow for AT LEAST two hours, if not more. Hopefully you were able to source volunteer hair and make-up help, as some of the designers may have a lot of models in the show. The amount of time you allow for this process may well depend on the amount of assistance you have secured.

Once hair and make-up are completed, it will hopefully be time to get the models dressed and lined-up backstage. You need to avoid models having running around in the public view before the show starts, especially when they are dressed in their designer's work. Try to find a good, discrete way to escort everyone backstage. Once everyone is backstage, try to keep things as quiet as possible, and make sure that everyone is ready to go. Again, keep your spirits light and try to have fun. Your show that you have worked so hard for is about to start, and it will all be over before you know it. Good Luck!

### **Responsibilities After the Show**

Immediately following the show, everyone involved will need to stay to take down the stage. It sounds awful to have to do this right after the production, but with a lot of help, the stage can be cleaned up in about 20 minutes. During this time, have the models work the crowd at the reception. It will give everyone a good opportunity to view the pieces from close-up and it will keep them distracted while they wait for the designers to finish cleaning up the stage.

After about a week or so, you need to start think about the location for next year's show. It is very difficult to book locations on campus and it would be irresponsible to

leave next year's directors without a secured location. There are various locations on campus that have worked in the past, but I feel that Lang Auditorium is going to be your best bet.