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THE CEDAR VALLEY'S HOME PAGE

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From corn to couture

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By **EMILY CHRISTENSEN**, *Courier Staff Writer*

CEDAR FALLS --- When the lights dim in the Lang Hall Auditorium Saturday, Teresa Ebensberger will be whisked away to a world of flashing cameras and fashion glitz.

"To see your designs up there, it feels like you are on the stage in New York. Just for a moment, you feel famous," the University of Northern Iowa senior said.

Ebensberger will graduate this year with a degree in textile and apparel. Though the Lang Hall stage is a far cry from fashion show runways in Milan, Paris and New York, textile and apparel students for years have used the annual textile and apparel runway show as a springboard to bigger and better careers.

Following graduation Ebensberger will head to Des Moines where she will intern at Blond Genius, a high-end boutique owned by another UNI alum. Her classmate, senior Cassie Anderson, will be taking off for New York where she will intern for Betsey Johnson, a New York fashion designer with international recognition. Senior Shante Wallican-Nesbit will use her college and work experience at Von Maur to get her foot in the door as a buyer for the company.

Finding those kind of jobs can be difficult, though, especially coming from a state that is known for corn and cows, not chic and couture. Each year a new batch of textile and apparel students put the finishing touches on their portfolios and head out into the big, bad fashion world where they go up against graduates who have lived and studied in the world's fashion capitals.

But that doesn't stop them. In fact, Annette Lynch, an associate professor in textile and apparel, said about 85 percent of UNI's graduates land jobs at corporate headquarters for well-known companies. There, their tasks can include anything from developing new products to testing material quality. Part of this increased success is a direct result of a \$2.3 million gift to the school, which purchased computer software that allows students to create their own fabric prints, Lynch said. National Science Foundation funding also paid for a state-of-the-art testing lab that gives students hands-on experience in quality assurance.

"This has been a real breakthrough for our students. It has made them very marketable," Lynch said.

Armed with big, black portfolios they will enter the crazy world of design sometime this year. Though their first internships may equate to nothing more than fetching coffee for a budding designer or a well-know fashionista, they are all dreaming big. Some say they will one day own their own boutique. Others want to work in the theater or on movie sets. But most of them shared Marilynda Longoria's dream of someday designing and marketing their own line of clothing.

The UNI senior can't tell you just what that line would look like, though.

"It would be a reflection of me, and as a person I am always changing," she said.

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GO & DO

What: "Style Perspectives," textile and apparel runway show

When: Saturday, 8 p.m.

Where: Lang Hall Auditorium, UNI campus

Cost: Free

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