

Learning to Design Garments That Really Fit Real People

An industrial design room engineering training program, where custom fit and custom design are at the forefront of the program.

"I was always hired to work as a fashion engineer in the industry, but because I had fit model measurements, I was often asked to try on the clothing the company was making. This allowed me to quickly check the fit of any pattern before it left for the factory. And because my life style fit the typical customer's profile, it often seemed as though everything the company was making was for me," explains Laurel Hoffman, professor at Goodwin College of Professional Studies, Drexel University (USA). "When I had the opportunity to write the courses, which eventually turned into this program, I incorporated this experience, as I found it enabled my students to learn quickly, and to excel at their lessons."



Laurel Hoffman

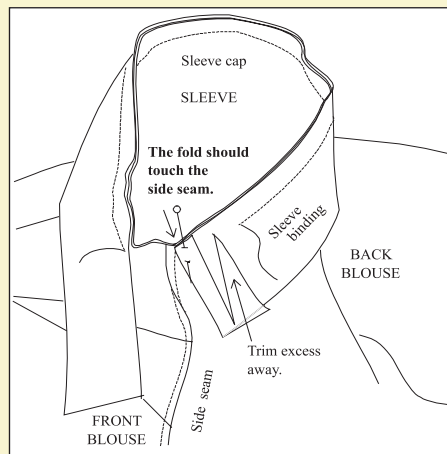
Learning to fit is vital to any student learning production skills. Because a grade-rule is based on a particular set of measurements, drafting to a grade-rule sample size can be considered custom fit. Designating each student as the fit model for her imaginary company gives better understanding to how a grade-rule works.

Designing in the industry is done for the typical customer for each line. "I have each student in my program think of herself as a typical customer for her company's line," says Prof. Hoffman. Designating the student as the typical customer gives each student design focus. She does this as she learns industrial grade-rule and its applications, including custom grading to produce patterns from the grade-rule that fit her; how to copy ready-made garments and fit them; how to draft from her person-



Professor Laurel Hoffman with students at the Goodwin College of Professional Studies, Drexel University

al measurements; and, of course, sample making. Prof. Hoffman points out that home sewing patterns adhere to a grade-rule, making it possible to access a complete set of pattern styles for the program. Designating each student as the fit model and typical customer also enables the other students to observe



Pin the first end of the sleeve binding in place. The fold should touch the side seam and should fold back, edge-to-edge, to the armhole.

their classmates' personal fabric and garment choices, which are often quite different than their own.

Most students are already computer literate, so no computer programs are used in the program. "They need hands-on skills to understand what the computer programs are doing, and whether or not the computer programs are accurate. The goal is for all students in the program to understand and be able to produce all production work without the aid of computers," she says.

"It's much easier to use a dress form after learning to fit real people, than it is to fit real people if trained to fit a dress form, which is why my students rarely use dress forms in the classroom." Since each student's fit model is herself, all fitting can be done in the classroom on live fit models.

An additional benefit from this method is that students really work when they make clothing for themselves. They are highly motivated because when they finish the program they have high-end industrial skills they can use in the industry, to develop their own businesses — and to make exquisite, high-end clothing for themselves.

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