



Comments at the Public Hearing on the Statewide Plan for Higher Education

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LIM College is a proprietary master's and bachelor's degree-granting college focused exclusively on the study of business and fashion. Housed in four buildings in midtown Manhattan, LIM College provides a well-rounded education through the combination of in-class instruction and required fashion industry internships. Our undergraduate degree programs include the bachelor of business administration in Fashion Merchandising, Marketing, Management, and Visual Merchandising, as well as the bachelor of professional studies and the associate of applied science in Fashion Merchandising. In 2009, LIM became a graduate-level institution, offering its first master's degree, an MBA in Fashion Management and Entrepreneurship. We are currently launching our second master's degree, a master's of professional studies in Fashion Merchandising & Retail Management. LIM College was founded in 1939 and has been witness to every significant change in the retail and fashion industry for more than seven decades. Alumni have gone on to excel at top companies, including Coach, Jones Apparel, Kenneth Cole Productions, Macy's, Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom.

In the 8 years since the last Master Plan, LIM College has stayed true to its core mission and values, maintaining a focus on the business of fashion and related industries, but LIM has also witnessed substantial change. The growth of undergraduate student enrollment from 608 students in fall 2004 to 1552 in fall 2012 required the commensurate growth of faculty, staff, and physical plant including a new residence hall. These changes, in addition to the development of online learning and graduate programs, have significantly increased the complexity of the College.

LIM College faces the challenges inherent to contemporary institutions of higher education and is actively implementing changes to address these challenges. They include poor preparation of high school graduates; changing demographics; economic uncertainty; student attrition; significant government, accrediting and media oversight; rapid technological innovation; space constraints; and more.

LIM College has developed a number of strategies to meet these challenges; in these remarks, I will describe those that speak to some of the Regents' Priorities for the Statewide Plan.

The poor preparation of high school graduates for college level work is thoroughly addressed in the Statewide Plan, and the importance of the P through 12 Common Core State Standards along with the focus on teacher and principal preparation cannot be overstated. Befitting LIM's mission, our approach to this issue is two-fold: first, LIM offers a program to expose high school students to college-level work as well as the demands of the fashion industry, and second, the College has developed very strong programs in math and English to ensure that students can succeed at college level work and also be career ready when they graduate. Since 2004, LIM College has offered its Fashion Lab program on Saturdays and during summers to high school students.

Courses taken for college credit include those requiring math and writing skills such as buying and fashion magazines, and courses include real-world application with fashion professionals such as photo shoots for styling and staging a fashion show for fashion show production.

While the average high school GPA of entering freshman at LIM College is 85, a third of LIM College's entering freshmen need English remediation and three quarters require remediation in math. To tackle these deficiencies, LIM has a well developed program in Writing across the Curriculum which mandates the quantity of writing that faculty should assign and which fosters a strong relationship between the Writing Center and the faculty in all departments. The College recently redesigned its remedial mathematics curriculum to increase skills and motivation among the student body. Currently, students in need of remediation are placed in module classes that allow them to focus more closely on their weaknesses. These modules run for half a semester and allow students to pass through the pre-college math curriculum more quickly, increasing students' morale and level of motivation. These course modules work closely with the math tutoring center, where students are given one-on-one help in their specific areas of need.

Given the difficulties entering college students face when enrolled in college-level math, LIM College supports a New York State requirement that all high school students take four years of math, adding statistics, mathematical modeling or pre-calculus to the current requirement.

Increasing career readiness of college graduates over the next eight years is the area at which LIM College most excels, and, we believe, more could be included in the statewide plan to address this priority. LIM College considers career readiness one of the hallmarks of its mission as the institution is committed to blending experiential education into the academic programs and to setting clear learning goals associated with career readiness. At LIM College, academic and professional objectives are joined. All students complete twelve credits of internship experience, beginning in the freshman year, and complete other non-credit experiences that expose them to the range of opportunities in the fashion and related industries. The College's five-year strategic plan has called for the strengthening of our programs for career development and experiential education through the creation this fall of a Department of Experiential Education and Career Management within Academic Affairs. Under this model, career development will have a strong learning outcomes focus, with faculty and career counselors working together on career portfolio development for students. This strengthened organizational format will help the College to continue to deliver a premier experiential education to improve student career readiness.

Extra-curricular as well as academic activities at LIM College help students to hone their career skills and network with potential employers. Annually over 1000 LIM College

students intern at New York City establishments in the fashion and affiliated industries. Also over 1000 LIM College students participate annually in fashion-related volunteer opportunities, which include working at New York Fashion Week, and helping out with Market Weeks, trunk shows and other special events. On campus each semester, LIM College hosts guest speakers from a variety of areas including public relations, visual merchandising, buying, product development, marketing and publishing. In addition to bringing industry representatives to campus, LIM students visit a diverse range of companies through field trips ranging from showrooms and buying offices to magazines and public relations firms. Since 2008, LIM College Visual Merchandising students have designed and installed displays in the front window of the Fashion Center Headquarters in the heart of the fashion district in Manhattan. In 2011, Visual Merchandising students competed to design an advertising concept for Solstice Sunglasses. The winning LIM College student's design was displayed in all of Solstice advertising for the summer season. In January of this year, LIM College's Student Association of the National Retail Federation (NRF) presented the results of their survey of 18-25 year-old consumers' shopping habits at a press conference at the NRF's annual convention, a major retail industry event. The students' research was reported by hundreds of media outlets across the country.

Each year, LIM College students participate in national scholarship competitions sponsored by the Fashion Scholarship Fund (FSF) and Black Retail Action Group (BRAG). Participation requires the development of projects based on real business scenarios and winners are chosen by fashion and retail executives. Over the past several years, thirty-five LIM College students have won FSF and BRAG scholarships.

This practical work experience, weaved with education in business theories, critical thinking, as well as mathematical and financial analyses results in high career placement for LIM College graduates, a good number of whom settle in New York state, moving from states across the country to grow their families and careers here. In fact, over 80% of LIM out-of-state graduates are subsequently employed in New York State. Finally, LIM College graduates have a student loan default rate of only 5% as compared to the national average of 9%, a record which serves to underscore the success of an experiential-driven curriculum.

At LIM College, a strong correlation exists between student career readiness and the College's relationships with area businesses. LIM College has a very active fashion industry advisory board made up of 32 fashion industry senior executives who help connect the College to new opportunities for student internships, fundraising for scholarships, and professional development for students. The Board also advises administration and faculty on the curriculum as it relates to the industry.

The MBA CEO Speaker Series brings the best and brightest minds in the industry on campus to interact with MBA students in an intimate setting. Previous speakers include leaders of Saks, Inc.; Home Shopping Network; and Kenneth Cole.

LIM College is an active partner with Fashion Group International (FGI), a global, non-profit, professional organization with 5000 members in the fashion industry including apparel, accessories, beauty and home. President Marcuse is on FGI's Board of Directors and several of our Foundation Board members are also on FGI's Board. In addition to participating in FGI's events we also co-organize events held at the College. Recent panel discussions include 'Turnaround in the Fashion Industry' and 'Fashion Entrepreneurship is the New Black'.

LIM College is a sponsor of Fashion 2.0, an organization for entrepreneurs in fashion which counts 2000 members in New York City. The College participates in panel discussions and sends students to attend monthly meetings.

LIM College sponsors and collaborates with FashInvest, a company whose goal is to foster the development of the emerging growth companies within the broad consumer sectors of Branded Goods, Retail, Fashion and Technologies related to these consumer opportunities. It is our goal to help fashion entrepreneurs by teaching and coaching on the financing, intellectual property and development aspects of business

Neither career readiness nor the relationship of higher education to business can be seriously planned without ensuring that initiatives are undertaken in a global context. Indeed, this understanding, that students must be educated for a global society can be given greater attention in the statewide plan. One of the main goals of LIM College's five-year strategic plan focuses on global initiatives that include expanding internships overseas, increasing collaboration with higher education institutions and industry abroad; expanding study abroad opportunities; and increasing recruitment and enrollment of international students, a strategy that will increase LIM student exposure to international cultures and will also help to offset, from an enrollment perspective, the projected decline of high school graduates in New York State over the next eight years.

Finally, other initiatives in LIM College's strategic plan that address the Regents' priorities include an initiative to expand articulation agreements and establish dual-enrollment programs with community colleges that offer compatible majors. Students enrolled in dual degree programs will have early access to an advisor at LIM College and will follow a specified curriculum path for degree completion. LIM College has plans to expand graduate programs to support the career readiness of a broader student population. New programs will include a master's of professional studies in fashion marketing, and all will feature an experiential-based curriculum. LIM College will strengthen and expand its online programs and curriculum, with the strategic plan calling for expanding the infrastructure for support and delivery of distance education as

well as adopting new educational technologies for improved teaching. Finally, the College has developed a comprehensive retention plan grounded in analysis of data and research that includes a number of initiatives to increase student success. These include improved leveraging of scholarship dollars, expanded support for students who struggle academically, initiating a culture of academic customer service, and increasing student engagement through innovative teaching practices.