Individuality and Personal Image: Styling the Chancellor

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**Introduction:** Fashion styling is organizing apparel and accessories in a visually pleasing way. Image management or personal styling is one of the three fashion styling areas: the other two being the entertainment and print industries. Fashion styling does not involve designing clothing rather, finding and coordinating clothing and accessories appropriate to the client’s portrayed image and personal taste (Burns-Tran & Davis, 2018; Kawamura, 2018). A fashion stylist needs to be knowledgeable about trends, study fabrics, silhouettes and colors; stylists need to research and learn potential client’s demographic and psychographic information to provide the best service in styling. This freshmen level class applies principles and elements of design to the personal and professional clothing needs of men and women. This styling project engages experiential based learning theory to style a client (Kolb & Kolb, 2017), in this case the university’s chancellor referred as the client. Through this project students dive in a diverse learning curve; they conduct a needs assessment, carry out a market research, and present their findings to the class.

**Project Description:** This project aims to apply concepts of *individuality*, *personal styling*, *image construction*, *proportion*, *color theory*, *ABC of accessories*, *fabric,* and *design selection*. Students practice real-world styling experience by assessing daily activities of the client, his dress code, and other personal needs and interest with respect to clothing. This styling project includes the following objectives described in the project guidelines:

1. Type the client’s speech about his job and activities and type of meetings he attends. Make sure to include any detail that could potentially help you to find the right clothing for him. Upload this word document to the submission folder (Chancellor’s speech).
2. You will be given an event. For the given event, you will search the internet and/or local stores for clothing and accessories.
3. You will come up with one style which will include a complete top, bottom, accessories, and furnishings as appropriate for the event (belt, shoes, socks, bow ties, dress shirts, cufflinks if applicable, etc.).
4. Once you determine the style, you will need to include images of the garments and accessories.
5. Include the size, fabric description such as color and type, fiber content, care details, fabric properties (wicking, non-iron, luxury fiber, etc.).
6. Describe why you chose the color, the fabric, and the garment combination for your client. Apply principles of design (color, texture) and elements of design (shape, form, or line) to justify your choice.
7. Include the link to all the items – in case the client likes to make a purchase he should not have to search for the items on the website.
8. Submit your work (PowerPoint format) the submission folder. First slide should be a title slide with your name and class title. Include enough slides that depicts the clothing and accessories and texts. Make sure to include all the objectives in the slides including objective 6, reasoning of your choice. Last slide should be list of references. Your grade will be based on your timely submission, quality of images, suitability of garment choices for the client’s taste and needs, suitability of garment choices for the occasion, and spelling/grammar.

**Project Results:** The client spoke to the class about his job and the events he attends. Students asked question about his pant size (measurement of the waist), shirt size (neck and sleeve), blazer jacket size (suits and sports coat), and shoe size (lace up and loafer sizes). Each garment was chosen with fabric and fiber description, size, care, price, and other point-of-purchase information. Each selection was justified by tying it to the client’s speech details.

The following 6 events were identified and the dress code was explained by the client:

1. Recruitment at high schools (day time meeting with students and super intendants).
2. University affair meetings (day time meeting with local legislators, mayors, state representatives)
3. Senators (day time meetings and out-of-state travels)
4. Dinner with donors (evening dinner meetings with potential or past donors)
5. Town hall meetings (day time meetings with faculty, parents, and college classroom visits)
6. A day at the office and meeting with college students.

**Assessment:** The rubric included the following criteria each weighed equally totaling to 100%: 1. Chancellor’s speech notes, 2. garment appropriate to the selected event, 3. sizing information, 4. rationale for selected garments and accessories, 5. fabric description, 6. high resolution images, 7. active links for each garment, 8. appropriate terminology from principle of design, 9. final look juxtaposition, and 10. timely submission.

**Impact Based on Student and Client Feedback:** In the course evaluation, students included the following ratings regarding the class project. Fifty percent of the students believed the project was helpful in understanding the course material. Twenty-five percent noted that they made more progress than most courses toward achieving course objectives. The results were emailed to the client and this was his response; “*Wow…all I can say is wow! This was beautifully done! I’m so impressed. I’ve shared it with (my wife) because I’m certain that I’ll mix these suggestions into my wardrobe. I’ve already made a suit and sportcoat decision for the winter based on the feedback I received (from the students) initially. I’ll make some more with this new information. You are doing GREAT work and I’m so impressed with your students’ final projects.”* In conclusion, this project helped students to understand the decision-making process that stylists go through when making clothing purchases based on their client’s needs. It is appropriate to assume that this project helped students gain experience as a stylist.

**Future Direction:** Stylists work with clients who are strangers (Burns-Tran & Davis, 2018). Consequently, the professional stylist must develop communication skills to get to know their client’s needs and wants with respect to clothing. Future directions of this project may include others members of the community, campus management, staff, and/or faculty.

Burns-Tran, S., & Davis, J. B. (2018). *Style Wise: A Practical Guide to Becoming a Fashion Stylist*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Kawamura, Y. (2018). *Fashion-ology: an introduction to fashion studies*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2017). Experiential learning theory as a guide for experiential educators in higher education. *Experiential Learning & Teaching in Higher Education*, *1*(1), 7-44.