



Focus on Fashion Institute of Technology

An understandable misconception about Fashion Institute of Technology is that it's only for students wishing to study Fashion Design or Fashion-related subjects. In fact, FIT's newest major is Film and Media, and its other extensive offerings include Fine Arts, Computer Animation and Interactive Media, and Toy Design, to name just a few.

Located on Manhattan's West 27th Street in the heart of the fashion district, FIT is actually part of New York State's public university system. While its students must all take the same core curriculum required in the rest of the SUNY schools, ensuring that they have a well-rounded college education, FIT's programs are unique in the degree to which they are tailored to prepare students for highly specialized careers. The tagline on the school's website, "Where Creativity Gets Down to Business," says it all. Even students majoring in Painting are prepared for employment, whether in education, gallery or museum work, or art therapy. Students majoring in Illustration are taught to accommodate the vision of their clients.

Students interested in careers related to all the arts including the business and marketing components will find majors at FIT that give them fairly unique training and first-hand exposure to their industries. The education is rigorous and fast-paced, with classes taught by practitioners in their fields who train students to meet standards that will be expected of them in their industries. Yet, students say they develop strong bonds with their teachers, who mentor them and work hard to connect them with internships and jobs after graduation.

Applicants coming from high school may apply only to FIT's two-year Associates' degree programs, yet the vast majority of FIT students stay on for a full four years to pursue a B.A. or B.F.A. degree, which may or may not be in the same department as their A.A. degree. Thus, although the requirements for each major are so intensive that it is not possible to do two majors at once, it is possible to graduate with two majors pursued sequentially.

It is also common for students to pursue a minor, which may be in a different art field from the one they are majoring in or in a liberal arts department. Frequently they opt for minors that will be relevant to their future careers, like for example Asian Studies or International Politics if they plan to work in an international business.

Students apply to a specific major, so the most important aspect of the application process is to figure out which major to apply to and what the various majors entail. All of this is explained thoroughly on the website, which applicants are exhorted to study carefully. In their application essay, they are asked to explain why they wish to pursue this particular field of study and how they know it's right for them. Knowing someone who works in the field or having a summer internship or a pre-college course at FIT or elsewhere can help them make their case.

The most well known and consequently most competitive programs to get into simply because they receive the most applications are Fashion Business Management, Fashion Design, and Advertising and Marketing Communications. Among the majors high school students are less likely to think of are: Accessory Design and Fabrication, Cosmetics and Fragrance Marketing, Fabric Styling, Packaging Design, Textile Development and Marketing, and many more.

Regional admissions officers spend much of their time speaking with prospective students to help them ascertain which program to apply to in view of their strengths and interests. On Portfolio Days, faculty, too, will look at prospective candidates' portfolios and, based on what they see, will advise them on which program they seem best suited to as well as how they can improve their portfolios prior to submission.

While the Business programs don't require a portfolio along with the application, for the programs that do require one, it is the most heavily weighted factor in admissions decisions, and the requirements, which vary by program, are described on the website.

To apply to FIT, applicants must begin by submitting the general SUNY application. Then the rest of their materials must be sent directly to the FIT campus where admissions officers review the transcript, looking for a "B" average in a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum that may include Honors, A.P. or I.B. courses. This is to ensure that the students can handle the liberal arts core curriculum. They do not require or read any letters of recommendation, and they do not require standardized test scores except for selection into the honors program.

To participate in the honors program, in addition to submitting SAT or ACT scores, applicants must write an essay and provide letters of recommendation from two teachers, one of whom taught the applicant in a liberal arts course. Those who are selected receive a stipend of \$1,000 per year and graduate with honors. They also receive priority course registration and leads on jobs and internships from the Presidential Scholar Alumni Network, and they have their own liberal arts courses, housing, monthly colloquia and trips to cultural events around the city.

FIT is certainly not for everyone, but it offers extraordinary opportunities for students who know what they want to do and are so passionate about doing it that they can't wait to get to their classes. Those students will enjoy an exciting and supportive community of teacher mentors and like-minded classmates, all for public university tuition.

