TURNING PASSION INTO CAREER DIRECTION

Jordan Caruso has always had an eye for clothing. “In high school, I loved to use clothes to express myself,” she says. In textile and apparel, she not only found passion but also saw a career direction. So, she applied to The Art Institute in New York City and got enrolled.

However, Jordan didn’t like the program. “The program was set up with long class hours and a very rigid course structure that didn’t allow for you to choose what you wanted to take,” she says.

Rather than gaining a broad knowledge of the whole industry you were channeled towards learning just fashion design unlike TAPP [the Textile and Apparel Program at UNI] which teaches you a variety of skill sets,” she adds.

So, Jordan decided to move back to Cedar Falls where she is originally from, and enroll at the University of Northern Iowa.

She knew of several people majoring in Textile and Apparel at UNI and all of them liked the program; she now knows why.

“I have discovered so many new things about the industry, and found an interest in textiles that I didn’t have before,” Jordan says.

TAPP “has a lot more hands-on projects rather than just tests and papers,” she adds. “It may seem easy but to work on everything simultaneously is a bit of a challenge. Even so, I enjoy the different kinds of things we get to work on rather than the traditional routes that many classes have.”

Jordan’s favorite among the classes she has taken so far is Dress and Human Behavior. “We were able to explore the way dress allowed people to change their identity to the outside world which creates a gender continuum rather than strictly male/female gender roles,” she says.

TAPP organizes an annual fashion show that showcases apparel products that students produce, an experience that Jordan has found to be quite interesting.

“Another interesting project I’ve gotten to do is analyzing the fashion market to determine what the trends for a future clothing season will be,” she adds.

Jordan, who works as an office manager at a screen printing company called The Shirt Shack, enjoys reading, knitting, and listening to podcasts in her free time.

She loves to do volunteer work, and has volunteered at various STEM Camps working with the YWCA Wize Girlz and a UNI STEM Camp for TAPP.

“Jordan Caruso, left, leads a CAD activity at the UNI STEM Summer Camp.”

“If the opportunity is available I volunteer for various events around campus,” she says. “The next thing I am doing is speaking as a representative for my major at Majors in Minutes on campus.”

Jordan has also recently signed up to volunteer as a UNI STEM Ambassador.

“My professor, Dr. [Annette] Lynch, insists that we should get involved and be involved, and has always let me know of new things that I can help with around campus,” she says. “Since the previous STEM Ambassador for our program is graduating, she suggested that I should apply.”

Once she graduates from UNI, Jordan plans to move out of the Midwest, to either of the coasts. “I hope to find a career having to do with textile production or selection,” she says.

Jordan believes future STEM students should “dive right in and experience every aspect” of college life. “There are many different unique parts of STEM programs that you wouldn’t realize [exist],” she says.

“Thinking of my major especially, most people don’t even realize that mine would have anything to do with STEM,” she adds. “We work with a lot of computer-aided design programs.”

“Another part that people never know of is the textile testing equipment that we are able to work with,” she continues. “Using this technology we can test the difference between different fibers and fabrics.

Then, there are tensile tester and crotick meter.

“We use machines like a tensile tester which tests how much tension can be put on a fabric before it rips or a crotick meter which tests the fabrics resistance to rubbing,” Jordan says.