The Fashion Merchandizing curriculum is business-oriented to increase students’ marketability. Additionally, to insure that students have the widest variety of career choices, the FM program centers around the following objectives:

Understanding - Students will demonstrate understanding of the practices specific to the apparel and textile industry and will become comfortable using the terminology of the field;

Integration - Students will be able to integrate economic, aesthetic, and scientific principles impacting the apparel and textile industry; and will demonstrate understanding of the historical, sociological, and technological realities that affect the field;

Application - Students will be able to apply knowledge of the characteristics and performances of materials in apparel and textile products in relation to selection and end-use;

Critical Thinking - Students will demonstrate a thorough understanding of the process of critical analysis and will demonstrate the ability to competently evaluate ideas, communications, presentations, strategies, products, services, and organizations;

Communication - Students will demonstrate clear and effective oral and written communication skills. Students will be able to give strong and persuasive presentations of their views, their research, their conclusions, and their products or services;

Decision-Making - Students will demonstrate decision-making that is mature, professional, and ethical through their behavior, both in their classes and in program-affiliated projects.

It is important to note that the FM field is interdisciplinary, and requires students to be knowledgeable and conversant in the principles of business, of aesthetics, and of science. Because of this multidisciplinary approach, FM students are prepared for a variety of career opportunities in the FM industry and in related industries. Examples include: Fashion Marketing, Apparel/Textile Sourcing, Retail Management, Retail Merchandizing, Fashion Buying and Assortment Planning, Visual Merchandizing, Product Development, Exhibition Curatorship, Fashion Styling, Fashion Journalism, Entrepreneurship, and Textile Performance and Analysis.

Speaking with Purpose

While the career opportunities in the Fashion Merchandizing field are diverse, they all involve elements of business, of art, and of science. FM classes therefore include multiple types of presentations and proposals covering three branches of public speaking: Informative, Persuasive, and Special Occasion.

The basics of speaking are, for the most part, consistent across disciplines. Knowing the expectations of a discipline is an important part of adapting to your audience, however. The papers in the “Speaking, in my opinion…” series do not represent an official statement from the department. They do, however, give you an introduction to different faculty opinions on effective speaking.
Audience Awareness

Just as the types of speaking tasks vary, audiences in the FM industry are also diverse. Audiences include people in the industry, customers, co-workers, supervisors, subordinates, and vendors from all over the world. Thus, FM academic training for students is designed to help them further their careers by undertaking real-world scenario training, guided by the tasks of the industry. This includes:

**Multi-Media Presentations**- Posters, Displays, Power Point, Podcast, Video
**Discussions**- with team-mates, partners, peers, subordinates, and supervisors
**Conferences/ Meetings**- with vendors, partners, clients, subordinates, and supervisors
**Research Publications**- academic, product, and market research

**Skills for Success**

The Fashion Industry Produce Life Cycle is very short (varies from weeks to months). Consequently, professionals in the industry must be able to apply their knowledge readily utilizing the following skills in:

**Critical Thinking**- self-reflection through thinking, evaluating, and critiquing the information

**Creativity**- think outside the box, initiate new ideas, improve existing ideas or concepts

**Analysis**- identify cause and effect, recognize needs/problems and determine solutions

**Synthesis**- integrate the above skills to become insightful and innovative

Because of this, both in their academic career and later in their professional career, FM students are expected to demonstrate these qualities in their speeches and presentations. Additionally, FM students must be able to defend their chosen suggestions, plans, and decisions with confidence in their knowledge and thorough understanding of their topics.

**Conclusion**

Professionals in the FM industry are required to speak using the persuasive language of business, the terminology of aesthetics, and the logical speech of science. In the speaking projects assigned in Southern Miss FM classes, students are expected to study the requirements of professional speech and presentation, and to integrate and master the knowledge, the skills, the habits, and the demeanor necessary for success in the industry. Ultimately, it is this multidisciplinary focus on speech and presentation that makes speaking in Fashion Merchandizing different from speaking in other disciplines.