



**The Journey to Accreditation: Why TAPAC Affiliate Membership Matters  
to The Department of Design at Radford University**

**By Farrell Doss & Holly Cline, Professors, Department of Design, Radford University**

The Department of Design at Radford offers focused concentrations in Fashion Design and Fashion Merchandising. Our goal is to equip our graduates with the requisite hard and soft skills demanded for professional employment within the textile and apparel industry. We have seasoned, dedicated faculty, great facilities, an industry focused advisory board, and a host of other enrichments infused into our 4-year degree programs. However, one cannot assume that their programs are providing all that their students need without an external review process. We believe that an accreditation review process is the best way to ensure program viability and excellence.

The Textile and Apparel Program Accreditation Commission (TAPAC) offers the only accreditation solely focused on apparel and textile disciplines. Their rigorous accreditation process is industry focused and embraces ITAA's Meta Goals. These Meta Goals represent the baseline standards for textile and apparel programs seeking excellence. Programs that earn TAPAC accreditation have successfully demonstrated their ability to provide their students a sound foundation for professional preparedness in the textile and apparel industry.

When the department of Design at Radford University initially heard about TAPAC's accreditation program, we decided from the outset that this was the standard to which we would aspire. Inquiries and investigations into the requirements for accreditation immediately began. We believe that TAPAC accreditation is important for the following reasons 1) our university prefers programs that are accredited, 2) accreditation ensures that the fashion design and fashion merchandising programs are meeting an external standard, and 3) accreditation increases our visibility to both internal and external stakeholders.

The Department of Design at Radford has learned that affiliate membership provides important benefits in preparation for full accreditation. We have learned how to structure our fashion programs in accordance with ITAA Meta Goals and align our fashion programs with TAPAC accreditation criteria. Affiliate membership and active participation with TAPAC are helping the Design Program at Radford "tell its unique story" within the parameters of learning outcomes and goals that are expected and required of accredited programs. We have found that our membership gives us a voice at the table, but more importantly, it provides us with a mechanism to learn, ask questions, develop programming, and strengthen our program and offerings. In addition, we are appreciative of being able to be connected with the accreditation process. This allows us to have a better understanding of resources and discipline-specific expectations. We feel that this membership is better preparing us for our future accreditation goal.