

Nov 8th, 12:00 AM

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Adams, Melinda Kirstin, "My iPad Does More than Play Games" (2016). *International Textile and Apparel Association (ITAA) Annual Conference Proceedings*. 136.

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My iPad does more than Play Games

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Keywords: iPads, technology, media

With rapidly changing technology and increased use of social media in the fashion industry, I felt that it was important to update the Promotional Strategies in Fashion II class. To make this change, I was inspired by a Digital Media course in the business program. The course gave me new ideas on what I could share with the students and how technology could be used to better prepare them for industry.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGY

In 2013, I received a mobile initiative grant from my university. The purpose of the grant was to bring mobile technology into the classroom and incorporate this technology into a course. The university bought ten iPads for students enrolled in Promotional Strategies in Fashion II class to use for the semester to complete assignments and projects.

Instead of using traditional projects, apps and tablets were used. Assignments were adjusted and rethought to incorporate the new technology being used. The technology was also used to incorporate the use of a virtual classroom in the course.

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY USED

The students had available to them an iPad for the semester enrolled in the course. They could use it for all of their courses that semester if they so choose. The first semester the course was offered with the iPad, there was one iPad for each student. If the students did not have an iTunes account, they were required to get one. Students were required to purchase the iMovie app for class projects. The garage band app was an optional purchase that could be used for projects. Students may have purchased other apps based on the needs for their projects. As the class grew larger, students worked in groups of 2 with one student responsible for the iPad but both using it for their assignments and projects.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & EVALUATION

As part of the grant, faculty received training on the variety of options in mobile technology and apps available for classroom use and projects. This training was meant to assist faculty in adjusting the course curriculum in which the mobile technology was to be used. Staff in the technology department were available for assistance and provided examples of best practices.

The first semester with the iPads took some learning and adjusting of the course on the fly. Determining how to incorporate the technology into the course beyond one or two assignments was difficult. During and at the end of each semester, iPad use was evaluated to determine how changes could be made to further incorporate the technology into the course. By incorporating more technology, the course curriculum began to focus more on marketing and public relations than how to produce a fashion show. This allowed for more technology and app inclusion each semester. Changes were further supported by reports in trade journals, newspapers, and research journals on the use of new apps, technology, and social media by designers and retailers.

The main project for the class evolved into a semester long planning of a special event chosen by each group of students. All public relations materials, marketing and videos were created to promote

their chosen event. Students created a direct mail piece that included a QR code with either a coupon or more information about the event.

As part of this project, each group also created a press release, advertisements for print, social media, email and the web, a short iMovie, and a fashion film. All pieces had to support the event and create a brand image and feel.

Each semester the course was offered, students' projects were evaluated and compared to professional work. Based on these evaluations and student comments, projects would be tweaked and students provided more examples and training in using the required and optional apps. The final and most recent set of event proposals, short iMovie and fashion films were of professional quality and could pass for actual commercials.

CONCLUSIONS

After teaching this course for several semesters, what I have learned with the incorporation of new technology in any form to a course is to constantly evaluate the students' work and curriculum delivery. As with traditional teaching methods or incorporating anything new, you have to evaluate how it can be used and should it be used in the classroom. Technology can be fun but it has to have value to the students, their future, and the curriculum.

Adding the video portion to this course, has provided both fashion merchandising and design students with news skills that can showcase what they have learned and assist in getting internships and jobs. The videos can also assist in promoting students if they are wanting to start their own business.

Anyone thinking of adding new technology should look to see what support is available and take a leap of faith. It is worth it and will improve the course in which the changes are implemented but other courses as well as you look at how what you are learning impacts everything you teach.