



Merchandising Program Student Handbook **Updated December 2017**

The Great Plains IDEA Merchandising Program is designed to give you the competitive advantage in today's retail environment. Our technology-rich program ensures you will improve business strategies through profit maximization, cost-cutting, customer satisfaction and selling approaches measured through the triple bottom line. Our curriculum provides in-demand skills to advance your career in the apparel or retail industry.

Skills you will learn or build upon in this program:

- Learn data analytic techniques to determine potential impact on organizations and better understand consumer behavior.
- Develop effective business strategies and customer-focused product development strategies.
- Create flexible promotional campaigns to increase brand equity and loyalty.
- Navigate the ethical dilemmas of consumer privacy.
- Balance the interests of businesses, consumers and society to support a sustainable future.
- Evaluate cost controls for distributing products within micro and mass markets.
- Understand trade regulations and cultural concerns unique to each country.
- Evaluate the evolving standards of corporate social responsibility.
- Develop a personal leadership philosophy for professional advancement.

Today's socially conscious customers rely on real-time reviews and social feedback of products and services to make decisions. You will learn the skills needed to offer the right products to the right customers at the right time.

This program will prepare you to work in:

- Buying and planning
- Corporate social responsibility management
- Entrepreneurial management
- Market research
- Merchandising
- Product development
- Promotions management
- Retail management
- Sales management
- Social media marketing
- Sourcing
- Supply chain management
- Visual communication management



Participating Universities

There are five Great Plains IDEA Universities participating in the Merchandising program:

- Kansas State University
- North Dakota State University
- Oklahoma State University
- South Dakota State University
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Merchandising Program Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to identify and understand theories, principles, practices and terminology related to the merchandising industry.
2. Students will demonstrate competency in communicating effectively using oral and written techniques, to include the use of technology, in the gathering and professional presentation of information.
3. Students will be able to apply their knowledge of leadership, planning, and controlling to business activities and merchandising organizations.
4. Students will analyze and evaluate the triple bottom-line (economic, social, environmental) impact of sustainable merchandising industry activities and processes.
5. Students will demonstrate strong research, analytical and strategic decision-making skills.

Merchandising Curriculum: Master's Degree

The master's degree in merchandising is a 36 credit hour post-baccalaureate program of study. To qualify for this degree, students must:

- Be admitted to the master's degree program at a participating university.
- Complete the necessary coursework.
- Meet the master's degree requirements of their admitting/degree granting university.

The 10 core courses (30 credits) listed in the [Great Plains IDEA Course Planner](#) are required for the master's degree. Six (6) additional credits are taken to meet the unique requirements of the student's home university. The six additional credits should be discussed with the academic adviser and home university in advance of registration.

Consult your academic adviser when selecting or dropping courses. [Course descriptions](#) may also be found on the Great Plains IDEA website.

Should a challenge in a course emerge, contact your academic adviser and instructor. A Zoom meeting may be scheduled between the academic adviser, student, and instructor to discuss potential solutions.

Degree titles vary by university.

- Kansas State University – Master of Science in Apparel and Textiles Merchandising
- North Dakota State University – Master of Science in Merchandising
- Oklahoma State University – Master of Science in Design, Housing and Merchandising with an option for Retail Merchandising Leadership
- South Dakota State University – Master of Science in Merchandising
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln – Master of Science in Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design



Merchandising Curriculum: Master's Certificate

The master's certificate in merchandising is a 12 credit hour post-baccalaureate program of study. To qualify for this certificate, students must:

- Be admitted to the master's certificate program at a participating university.
- Complete the necessary coursework.
- Meet the master's certificate requirements of their admitting/degree granting university.

The three courses (9 credits) listed in the [Great Plains IDEA Course Planner](#) are required for the master's certificate. One course (3 credits) is taken as an elective. The elective course is determined based on the student's interest and adviser's approval. Students should consult with their academic adviser when selecting or dropping courses. [Course descriptions](#) may also be found on the Great Plains IDEA website.

Should a challenge in a course emerge, the student is expected to contact his/her academic adviser and instructor. A Zoom meeting may be scheduled between the academic adviser, student, and instructor to discuss potential solutions.

Certificate titles vary by university. The following universities provide a Great Plains IDEA Master's Certificate in Merchandising:

- North Dakota State University
- Oklahoma State University
- South Dakota State University

Networking in the Industry

Mentorship

Quality mentoring greatly enhances students' chances for success. In addition to faculty mentors, actively seek out an industry mentor. Look for someone with a position that interests you. Stay up-to-date on what's happening in the apparel and retail industry near you and note names of those with a high level of involvement. Don't hesitate to contact them. You might be surprised at their willingness to help aspiring young professionals. They may be flattered when you tell them you respect their accomplishments and ideas. Call or email to request a half hour of their time. Send a thank you note after your first meeting. If you do follow-up meetings, they may be able to help you define and achieve your career goals.

LinkedIn

Creating a LinkedIn profile early in your program is a great way to stay connected with faculty, peers, and alumni of the merchandising program. You can also share compelling coursework you created throughout the merchandising program using LinkedIn's slide sharing app. Prospective employers use academic slide presentations to predict your visual and oral communication potential as a leader.

LinkedIn differs from conventional resumes because it provides you with an online presence and way to market yourself using the power of the Internet. Recruiters are increasingly using LinkedIn to review online resumes to recruit employees. Prospective employers will be able to find you through searches based on your profile. These searches may target industry specific information in your resume such as your transferable merchandising skills, geographic location, job experience, and educational training. You might be surprised at the clout of your home institution when recruiters seek employees!

In addition, your LinkedIn profile will help you strategically find people at companies of interest. Members of your LinkedIn network can endorse your critical skills that will drive recruiters to your profile and improve your marketability. The ultimate goal of a great LinkedIn profile is to build a network of industry professionals and



academic peers to help improve your visibility and career potential in the merchandising industry.

LinkedIn also offers group memberships supporting your career aspirations such as the Merchandising Career Network-Great Plains IDEA where you can share diverse content (e.g. articles, presentations, papers and discussions by communicating with faculty, current students and alumni). Other groups of interest to help you remain current with industry issues include: Retail Industry Professionals Group, ALLRETAIL retail executive network and Innovation Enterprise Big Data, Analytics, Strategy, Finance, Innovation among many others.

Make a point to begin creating or reviewing your LinkedIn profile today. You don't have to create the perfect profile in a single day. Just like your resume, it pays to review and edit your LinkedIn profile often. Likewise, building your network takes time and that is why we advise creating a LinkedIn profile early in your program.

Netiquette

The definition of netiquette is the informal code of behavior for communicating on the Internet (Online Etymology, n.d.). You will routinely provide written responses to discussion questions throughout your online master's program. These responses will be read by both your merchandising peers and instructor.

Some basic rules of netiquette include checking the course website periodically throughout each week to stay engaged with your peers. Do not post responses in all capital letters, which is perceived by many as yelling or shouting. Post your opinions in an objective and non-threatening manner when you disagree with peer feedback.

It is good netiquette to include the name of the person you are responding to prior to typing the response (e.g. Hi Sue:). Keep in mind that your peers and instructor may have different viewpoints and it is important to try to understand others' diverse perspectives. Engaging in good netiquette helps to support an inclusive and high performing community of learners.

As you construct a written response to a discussion question, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your response answer the question?
- What is main point of your argument?
- Is your argument logical, well written, and clear to others?
- Have you drawn upon class readings to support the response to the question?
- Are there examples from your personal or business experience that strengthen the argument?
- Have you properly cited sources and provided references in American Psychological Association (APA) 6th Edition Style Manual format?

Prior to posting a written response to a discussion question, there are several key points that you should consider:

- Proofread your response by checking for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Complete responses by the due date.
- Plan your responses prior to posting.
- Stay focused on the current discussion topic and avoid off-topic conversations in the discussion board.
- Extend course discussions by providing substantive feedback to your peers.
- Before providing discussion feedback to peers, review the other peer responses to avoid duplication.



Substantive Feedback

The goal of substantive feedback is to provide additional information supporting the discussion question. Substantive feedback should always be constructive and positive in nature. It is a great idea to seek feedback from the instructor at the beginning of the semester about the quality of your discussion responses along with suggestions to improve, if necessary.

Substantive feedback:

- Includes meaningful information offered to your peers and instructor that demonstrate the current course concepts.
- Shares insights from course readings, additional research from online and written sources, or is based on your personal and business experiences.
- Does not include statements like, “Good job” or “I agree with your points totally”.

Library and Writing Resources

University Writing Centers

Each university’s writing center is a resource for graduate student writers who desire to improve their writing skills by providing one-on-one consulting, workshops and resources.

- [Kansas State University Writing Center](#)
- [North Dakota State University Writing Center](#)
- [Oklahoma State University Writing Center](#)
- [South Dakota State University Writing Center](#)
- [University of Nebraska-Lincoln Writing Center](#)

APA Formatting and Citations

- [The Basics of APA Style \(Tutorial\)](#)
- [FAQs about APA Style](#)
- [APA Style Blog](#)
- [APA Formatting and Style Guide](#)

For more information about APA formatting, please refer to Appendix A.

Additional Library and Website Resources

When completing graduate coursework, it is expected that each written statement be supported by credible information. The Internet has a countless number of resources representing a wide range of topics, some of which can provide useful content. A list of resources is available below.

[Advertising Redbooks](#)

[Berg Fashion Library](#)

[BizStats](#)

[Business Source Complete Database](#)

[Colour Index International](#)

[Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion](#)

[Encyclopedia of Measurement and Statistics](#)

[Google Scholar](#)

[Hoovers](#)

[IBIS World](#)

[Marketing Charts](#)

[MediaMark MRI+](#)

[Mergent](#)

[National Retail Federation](#)

[Sourcing Journal](#)

[SRDS](#)

[Statista](#)

[United States Census Bureau](#)

[Vogue Archive](#)



Appendix A. APA Formatting

Reference Page

- Double-space all entries
- Use a hanging indent
- Break URLs **before** punctuation marks (see *Publication manual* p. 192)
- Books – **italicize** titles and **capitalize** only the first word, the first word after a colon, and proper nouns (e.g., *Publication manual*)
- Periodicals—**italicize** titles and **capitalize** all important words (e.g., *Journal of Applied Biology*)
- Articles and short works—**do not italicize** and **capitalize** only the first word, the first word after a colon, and proper nouns
e.g., Hanson, R.K., Steffy, R.A., & Gauthier, R. (1993). Long-term recidivism of child molesters...
- Journals--**italicize** the journal title and the volume number, but **not** the issue number, and **do not leave a space** between the volume and the parenthesis:
e.g., Talub, R.S. (2000). Copyright, plagiarism, and Internet-based research projects: Three “golden rules.” *Tech Trends*, 44(4), 7-9.
- Journals with **DOI (digital object identifier)** – include the DOI instead of the URL (omit period at end)
e.g., Herbst-Damm, K. L., & Kulik, J. A. (2005). Volunteer support, marital status, and the survival times of terminally ill patients. *Health Psychology*, 24, 225-229. doi:10.1037/0278-6133.24.2.225

In-Text Citations

- Use the **last names of authors** (not the first names) and **year** when discussing others’ work. (See author chart on p. 177 of the *Manual*)
e.g., The most recent study of the eating behaviors of porcupines revealed that ...(Smith, 2002).
e.g., Smith (2002) studied the eating behaviors of porcupines and found...
- In the same paragraph, do NOT repeat the year if you repeat the author's name in the sentence, but include the year in all parenthetical references in the same paragraph (see p. 174 in the *Manual*)
- Avoid including the title of the work within your text—UNLESS the work does not have an author. If no author is named, change the format of titles (see **No author** section below for examples)
- For **parenthetical citations and the reference list**, use the **ampersand (&)** for two-six authors:
e.g., (Smith, Jones, & Rogers, 2006)
- For **in-text sentences**, use the word “**and**”: Smith, Jones, and Rogers (2006) found...
- Use commas and “p.” or “pp.” for page numbers:
e.g., One study found that rats “showed no sign of emotion” (Jones, 1999, p. 45).
- Page numbers are **required** for direct quotations (Smith, 2009, p.45)
- APA **encourages** the inclusion of page, paragraph, chapter, or section numbers as a courtesy for easy access:
e.g., (Shimamura, 1989, Chapter 3)----NOTE: DO NOT ABBREVIATE "Chapter."
e.g., (Myers, 2000, para. 5) or (Myers, 2000, ¶ 5)
e.g., (Beutler, 2000, Conclusion section, para. 1)

Rules for Citations

Two authors

- In-text: cite **both** names **every** time the work is mentioned.
- Reference list: cite both names.
- When works have the same author/s and date, assign a letter on the reference page and use it in the text, too:
e.g., (Derryberry & Reed, 2005a, 2005b; Rothbart, 2003a, 2003b)



Three, four, or five authors

- In-text: cite **all names for the first reference**, and cite the **first author and “et al.”** in subsequent references.
- Reference list: Cite **all names**.

Six or seven authors

- In-text: cite only the name of the first author followed by “et al.” for all references.
- Reference list: provide the initials and surnames of the **all six or seven authors**.

More than seven authors

- In-text: cite only the name of the first author followed by “et al.” for all references.
- Reference list: provide the initials and surnames of the **first six authors**, insert an **ellipses**, and give the **last author's** name and initials (see example #2 at the bottom of p. 198 in the *Publication manual*).

Groups as authors

- Spell out the full title of long or easily-recognized groups and indicate the abbreviation for the first reference and abbreviate afterwards.
- Use brackets within parentheses: (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 1999)...(NIMH, 1999)
- Use parentheses in the sentence: Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD, 1999) found that...

No author

- **Reference page**, alphabetize by the **first important** word in the title and place the year after the title.
- **Reference page**, only **capitalize** the first word, proper names, and the first word after a colon.
e.g., The new health-care lexicon. (1993, August/September). *Copy Editor*, 4, 1-2.
- In-text: use **quotation marks** and **capitalize** the important words in article titles:
e.g., The article, “The New Health-Care Lexicon,” (1992) discusses the...
e.g., ... (“The New Health-Care Lexicon,” 1993).
- In-text: **italicize** and **capitalize** book titles, periodical titles, and other major works:
e.g., ...the book *College Bound Seniors* (1979).

Anonymous

- Do not use “Anonymous” for the author’s name—except when the source uses it.
- On the reference list, use “Anonymous” for the author’s name and alphabetize under “A.”
- In the parenthetical citation, use it in place of the author’s name:
e.g., (Anonymous, 1998)

Secondary sources

- When possible, use primary sources.
- Otherwise place secondary sources on the reference page, but refer to the original study in your discussion, and include the secondary source in parentheses:
e.g., Skinner (2000) found no evidence of emotion in rats (as cited in Smith & Jones, 2006).

Personal communication, interviews, and standard classical/religious works (see pp. 178-179 in the *Manual*)

- Do not list them on the reference page, but cite them in the text.
e.g., T.K. Lutes (personal communication, April 18, 2001) found that ...
e.g., 1 Cor. 13:1 (Revised Standard Version)
e.g., (Qur'an 5:3-4)

Block Quotations

- Indent/block quotations of 40 or more words.
- Indent ½” from the margin (5 spaces) and double-space.
- If there are additional paragraphs within the block, indent an additional ½”.

Lists

- To set off lists within a paragraph, use letters with parentheses (a), (b), (c), etc.



- In bulleted lists, use numerals/figures without parentheses if ordination is important; otherwise, bullets are acceptable:
 1. item
 2. item
 3. item

Running heads

- Include a running head in the header (beginning with the title page) of the manuscript; limit the head to 50 characters, counting letters, punctuation, and spaces between words.
- The running head is an **abbreviated title**, not necessarily the exact words.

Numbers

- Use figures for numbers 10 and above.
- Exceptions: use numbers with units of measurement or when low numbers are grouped with high numbers.

General APA Guidelines

- Do not use “this present study” or “the current study” to refer to someone else’s work—use them to refer to your own study.
- Watch your tone—even when you disagree with or challenge a study, present the evidence in a polite tone:
 - e.g., Smith may have overlooked the importance of
- The longest part of a research report is usually the literature review/introduction.
- Use past tense (e.g. showed) or present perfect tense (e.g. have shown) for the literature review.
- Use past tense for results.
- Use present tense (e.g. results indicate) for conclusions and implications.
- Passive verbs are acceptable (the study was designed to...; the data were analyzed), but active verbs are preferred (the researchers designed the study to...)
- Do not use contractions.
- Avoid using verbs such as *feel, think, believe, stated, wrote, said, confirm, prove*—use *find, reason, assess, test, hypothesize, demonstrate, investigate, provide evidence, support* and *indicate*.
- Use qualifiers to allow for exceptions to your claims (*may, might, possible*): One possible explanation might be...One interpretation may be...The data suggest....The results appear to ...
- Use transitions: Notably,In contrast,....Similarly,....First,....Second,....Third...
- Be concise: strive for clarity and economy of expression—use active voice (if possible) and use short phrases and words instead of wordy phrases.
 - The study was designed by Smith to = Smith (2001) designed a study to
 - Being that or since = because
 - Based on the fact that = because
 - The obtained results showed = The results showed
 - Participants for the study were = Participants were
 - Due to the fact that = Because
 - The reason is because = The reason is that
 - A total of eight participants = Eight participants

References

- American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.
- netiquette. (n.d.). *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved October 2, 2017 from Dictionary.com website <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/netiquette>
- Szuchman, L.T. (2005). *Writing with style: APA style made easy*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

