

London College of Fashion, UAL

Leadership

Professor Frances Corner, OBE

About the project

Summary

Since becoming Head of London College of Fashion (LCF) in 2005 Frances Corner has embedded the concept of "Better Lives", which is a term used to describe our work using fashion, as a discipline, to drive change, build a sustainable future and improve the way we live. The work encapsulates environmental, social and economic principles and is widely communicated to all stakeholders – staff, students, industry partners and external audiences.

Project partners

Far too many to list, but they include UAL and LCF colleagues, governors, students, fashion industry partners, community partners and participants from the wider community.

The results

The problem

How can fashion education effectively transform lives?

The approach

To establish the ethos of 'Better Lives', one of the cornerstones of Professor Corner's headship at LCF. It is a wide agenda which encapsulates how we need to work as educators and is a dialogue between staff, students and the wider community. This has been achieved through:

- Establishing the Centre for Sustainable Fashion
- Developing our Fashion Education in Prisons Programme with the aim of reducing re-offending through providing participants with marketable skills. The Programme involves both collaborative student projects, working with serving female offenders, and the recent creation of a fashion manufacturing unit within HMP Holloway.
- Developing strategic industry partnerships, with companies who share our values, so as to inspire our practice and ensure enterprise and employability are embedded in the LCF student experience. A good example being a 5 year partnership with luxury conglomerate Kering.
- Supporting staff and student sustainability projects such as our 'green space' and beekeeping initiatives, leading to the establishment of the "Sustainability Projects Fund" and the creation of a new full-time Sustainability Coordinator post for the College.



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Profile

- LCF is one of 6 colleges which comprise UAL
- LCF has over 500 staff & 5,500 students
- UAL has over 2,000 staff and 19,000 students
- LCF is located over 6 urban London sites.

Finalist's case study

Our goals

For students to graduate from LCF with the confidence and ability to help shape the world in which we live and to help plan and respond to challenges in ways which are inconceivable to us now.

Obstacles and solutions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to establish LCF as the leader in sustainable fashion research and consultancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of the Centre for Sustainable Fashion in 2008 and subsequently securing funding from external sources to see the team grow from 2 to 15 staff by 2015. This has enabled over 50 education and research projects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to bring together the varied student and staff interests within sustainability in order to bring about whole institution change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a new 'Sustainability Coordinator' post in 2014 in order to form coherent sustainability initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to build on the success of our award winning Fashion Education in Prisons Programme in order to work with other community groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Developing our Social Responsibility Team from 1 member of staff to 4 so as to enable a wide range of community outreach projects to take place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage all staff and students to champion sustainability at grass roots level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of the "Sustainability Projects Fund" to enable any LCF staff member or student to work on activities relating to sustainability in addition to approving LCF's first volunteering programme to help LCF staff actively engage with sustainability during salaried hours.

Performance and results

- Creating the MA Fashion and the Environment course in 2008 – the first MA programme specialising in fashion design for sustainability
- Launching a five year collaboration with Kering in 2014, sustainable fashion leaders in industry.
- Partnering with Neal's Yard and Peter Kindersley to offer a PhD scholarship within the Centre for Sustainable Fashion
- Ongoing work with multiple prisons since 2009 as part of our award winning (Green Gown, 2011, Times Higher Award, 2013, Big Society Award, 2014) 'Fashion Education in Prisons Programme', including the creation of a manufacturing unit at HMP Holloway in 2014
- Establishing the annual 'Fashion Matters' gala to raise money (£85,000 in 2014) to create new scholarships and bursaries to enable students from diverse backgrounds to study at LCF
- Championing energy saving initiatives, e.g. innovative timer switches (Green Gown, 2014), which help reduce our consumption and carbon footprint

- Supporting staff and student activities aimed at 'greening' our campus, e.g. a roof garden at our Oxford Circus site, beehives at three of our six sites, mini orchards at two of our East London sites and extensive natural dye and fibre plant gardens from which staff and students can create garments.

The future

Lessons learned

Successfully embedding sustainability is an ongoing commitment as our knowledge of the subject is constantly evolving. Establishing new teams and departments, with the specialist staff to drive change, takes time, financial investment and conscious dedication to prioritise long term goals. Where possible we have seized opportunities to make quick changes (eg timer switches on energy intensive equipment, Green Gown winner 2014), but it is only through the embedding of the Better Lives ethos that many lessons have been learnt which will help the College develop over the next 5 – 10 years, especially relevant given our forthcoming move to Stratford in East London, which will see LCF united on one site for the first time.

Sharing your project

- Publishing 'Why Fashion Matters' in 2014 (Thames and Hudson)
- Regular media contributions on wide ranging issues addressing sustainability in fashion including articles in, for example, the Huffington Post and Salt Magazine, in addition to my own blog.
- Working with our first Patron, HRH The Countess of Wessex GCVO, who champions our 'Better Lives' agenda to a far wider audience
- Winning awards such as the *Women: Inspiration & Enterprise Award for Education* in 2015, being named a London Leader in Sustainability in 2009 and the receipt of an OBE for Services to the Fashion Industry all help publicise LCF's pioneering projects

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Frances Corner is delighted to have been nominated for a Green Gown Award. She strongly believes in the direction in which she has steered LCF over the past 10 years and to have her work recognised in this way will allow her to promote LCF's activities and achievements to an even larger audience, whilst continuing to embed the principles which she has placed at the heart of everything she does.

Further information

<http://francescorner.com/>

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