

Business attire — it all comes down to comfort

By **JENNY LIVINGSTON**
Staff Writer

Used to throwing on sweats on the way to class? Do you just wear anything that's not in the ever-increasing dirty clothes pile on your

floor? Well, getting dressed won't always be so easy. Out in the cold, hard business world, clothing counts. A professional image can be just as important as a good resume. To help its members prepare for

the world of business attire, the Delta Sigma Pi business fraternity invited local fashion professionals to a pair of meetings Sept. 28, and Oct. 5, to stage fashion shows of both men's and women's clothing.

The fashion shows featured men's clothes from The Hub, Ltd., and women's clothes from Ivey's. All the models were members of the co-ed fraternity.

Both meetings stressed the importance of personal style to update more traditional business looks. "It's the accessories that make an outfit your own," said Mary Frantz, the wardrobe consultant for Ivey's at South Square Mall in Durham. She suggested adding scarves, pocket squares, colored hose and unique but understated jewelry.

Nearly all of the pieces shown at the meeting could be mixed and matched to create different looks. "I never would have thought so many combinations could be made out of so few clothes," said senior business major Bobby Blakley. Indeed, with the complete outfit costing as much \$400-\$500, it is essential that pieces be versatile.

"You should never buy anything unless you have at least five things to match it," Frantz said.

The most fashionable professional combinations this year, Frantz said, are the short jacket with a long skirt, and the short skirt with a long jacket.

Salley also stressed the importance of versatility, but added: "You should never try to match things exactly. The worst thing you can do is to coordinate things right on the money." Doing that, he said, shows a lack of creativity and style.

Breaking the accepted molds of business dressing is essential, Salley said. "A lot of men are hiding behind a cloak of conservatism when they're really just boring, with no

fashion sense. Conservative dressing is not the same as boring."

Junior Suzy Fulp did not agree with Salley's views on conservative styles. "I think you have to dress very conservatively, especially if you're interviewing with an accounting firm," she said. "But I agree with what he (Salley) said about it being important for the guys to dress comfortably. You have to be able to have confidence in what you're wearing."

Salley advocated setting aside the old standbys — the standard white shirt, the traditional American cut suit, the yellow or burgundy tie — in favor of newer, more individualized looks. The continental-cut suit is making a comeback, he said. With its broader, more padded and pleated shoulders and ventless back, it cuts a bolder, more flattering profile. Also, striped shirts, bold ties and even patterned socks are now acceptable ways of individualizing a business wardrobe.

The only rule that is absolutely inviolable, said Salley, is that button-down sport shirts do not go with suits in the workplace.

The women's show placed a greater emphasis on following rules than breaking them. Everyone should be color-analyzed to establish a complementary color scheme for their wardrobe, Frantz said. The pieces she showed were in subdued, conservative colors: camel, blue, navy, burgundy, gray and cream. She emphasized the importance of wearing only those colors which are most flattering to the individual's coloring.

It is also important that colors be balanced in the overall composition of an outfit. An outfit should have no fewer than eight, but no more than 13 focal points, she said. Each color, accessory and piece of jewelry provides a separate focal point.

Other rules she laid down were equally strict. Shoes, she said, should never be open-toed or slingback. Only pumps and flats are appropriate, never boots or sandals. Skirts should always cover the knee. And earrings should never dangle or overwhelm the face.

"I'm glad I'm not a woman," senior Brian Rourke said. "Men don't have to worry about all that stuff."

All rules aside, both Frantz and Salley agreed that the key to successful professional dressing is comfort. Feeling good in your clothes is the most important thing to projecting the confidence and authority required in the business world, Salley said.

"It's not really the clothing that counts," Salley said, "it's how you wear it."



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An Ivey's fashion consultant shows how to dress for success



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