The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) announced on Wednesday the launch of the Social Justice Center (SJC) at FIT, a first-of-its-kind higher education initiative, supported by founding partners PVH Corp., Capri Holdings Limited, and Tapestry.

The fashion conglomerates, through their respective foundations, have each committed $1 million to help launch the center created to increase opportunity and accelerate social equity within the creative industries for the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) community. The first-of-its-kind initiative will provide mentorship, education, and career support.

Other industry leaders who have pledged support, include Carolina Herrera, Prada, Ralph Lauren, Saks, Target, and The Fragrance Foundation. Likewise, G-III Apparel Group, made the establishing gift to the SJC Scholarship Fund, which already has reached more than $1.5 million in contributions.

The SJC at FIT will nurture a racially and ethnically diverse talent pipeline to assure BIPOC professionals achieve their full potential. It will provide scholarships for middle school, high school, and college students. Once the students are in college, pathways to advancement will be offered through internships, mentorships, and apprenticeships provided by SJC partners.

Numerous scholarships are already available, including the Social Justice Center Endowed Scholarship, the Amsale Aspire Initiative, the Art Smith Memorial Endowed Scholarship, the Black Student Illustrators Graduation Award, and the Prada Scholarship at FIT, among others.

To get there, its approach will equally be supported by four pillars: collaboration among leading corporate and nonprofit CEOs; access to the talent, creativity, and expertise of FIT faculty and students as resources;
nonprofit CEOs; access to the talent, creativity, and expertise of FIT faculty and students as resources; a sustained commitment to funding support for scholarships and programs; and ongoing accountability that will identify and measure the advancement of BIPOC professionals.

Jeffrey Tweedy, former president and CEO of Sean John and an FIT alumnus, will be a special advisor to the FIT president to help build and expand the center. Moreover, an industry advisory council of 16 executives has been established to counsel, collaborate, and help measure progress in achieving equity within the creative industries.

“A powerful and much overdue dialogue was sparked last year around diversity and inclusion, which led to a sobering realization that there was much work to do within the creative industries and at FIT as well. Since then, we have been building a strong foundation for the Social Justice Center at FIT,” said FIT president, Joyce F. Brown.

“I am grateful for the early support from PVH, Capri Holdings, Tapestry, G-III Apparel Group, and FIT's other charter partners. They have demonstrated a formidable commitment to these efforts, and I am confident that the center is poised to effect meaningful change.”

By Jennifer Braun

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